

AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

Robert Alter's books include *Partial Magic: The novel as a self-conscious genre*, 1976, and *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 1982.

Jonathan Bennett is Professor of Philosophy at Syracuse University, New York. His books include *Kant's Dialectic*, 1974, and *A Study of Spinoza's Ethics*, 1984.

Allan Draham is Keeper and Deputy Director of the National Gallery. He is the author of *The Architecture of the French Enlightenment*, 1980.

Julian Hadden's *Verdi*, 1984, in the Master Musicians series, has just been reissued in paperback. He is currently working on a study of Puccini.

David Carlton is the author of *Anthony Eden: A biography*, 1981, which was recently reissued in paperback, and co-editor of *The Nuclear Arms Race Debated*, 1985.

Edward Chaney is co-editor of *Oxford, China and Italy: Writings in honour of Sir Harold Acton*, 1984.

Michael Creik is the author of *Scargill and the Miners*, 1984.

Dan Cruickshank is Features Editor of the *Architects' Journal*. He is the author of *London: The art of Georgian buildings*, 1975, and the *National Trust Guide to the Georgian Buildings of Britain and Ireland*, 1985.

EliendeKadt Dahrendorf is editor of *Russian Studies*, a collection of essays by the late Leonard Shapiro, to be published later this year.

Gordon Donaldson is Emeritus Professor of Scottish History and Palaeography at the University of Edinburgh, and historiographer to HM The Queen. His books include *A Dictionary of Scottish History, 1977*, and *Four Centuries: Edinburgh University life 1583-1983*, 1983.

Phillip Drew is the author of *The Meaning of Freedom*, 1982.

D. J. Enright's *The Alluring Problem: An essay on irony* was reviewed in the TLS of October 17.

Peter Fallon is the editor of *Brendan Behan: After the Wake*, 1983.

Hamish Fraser is a lecturer in History at the University of Strathclyde.

Norman Gash is the author of *Lord Liverpool: The life and political career of Robert Banks Jenkinson Second Earl of Liverpool 1770-1828*, 1984.

John Hayes's most recent book is *The Landscape Paintings of Thomas Gainsborough: A catalogue raisonné*, 1982.

Michael Holroyd's books include *Unreceived Opinions*, 1973, and *The Genius of Shaw*, 1979. He is working on a biography of Shaw.

Mervyn Jones's most recent novel, *Coming Home*, was published earlier this year.

John Keep is Professor of History at the University of Toronto. His *Soldiers of the Tsar: Russian army and society, 1462-1874*, was published last year.

Bruce Lenman is Reader in Modern History at the University of St Andrews. His books include *The Jacobite Risings in Britain 1689-1746*, 1980, and *The Jacobite Cause of the Great Glen 1630-1784*, 1984.

Richard Maltby is the author of *Harmless Entertainment: Hollywood and the ideology of consensus*, 1983.

Anthony Pagden is the author of *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the origins of comparative ethnology*, 1982.

Gregory Palmer is the author of *Biographical Sketches of Loyalists of the American Revolution*, 1984, and of the forthcoming *Guide to the American Collections of the British Library*.

Dilys Powell is film critic of *The Sunday Times* and of *Punch*. Her books include *The Villa Arlante*, 1973.

David Robinson is film critic of *The Times*. He is the author of *World Cinema*, 1973, and *Chaplin: His life and art*, 1985.

Carol Rumens's most recent collection of poems, *Direct Dialling*, was published last year.

David Shaw is Editor-in-Chief of the *Bibliographical Society's Cathedral Libraries Catalogue*. He is a lecturer in French at the University of Kent at Canterbury.

Robert Simpson's compositions include nine symphonies and eleven string quartets. He is the author of *The Symphony*, 1966, and *The Proms and Natural Justice: A plan for renewal*, 1981.

Robert Snell is a lecturer in Art History at Brighton Polytechnic, and author of *Théophile Gautier: A Romantic critic of the visual arts*, 1982.

Stuart Sutherland's *The Price of Everything* was published earlier this year.

David Walker is Principal Inspector of Historic Buildings, Scotland. His books include *Dream and Disillusion: A search for Australian cultural identity*, 1977.

A. J. Youngson is Chairman of the Royal Fine Art Commission for Scotland. He is the author of *The Making of Classical Edinburgh*, 1966, and *Beyond the Highland Line: Three journals of travel in eighteenth-century Scotland*, 1974.

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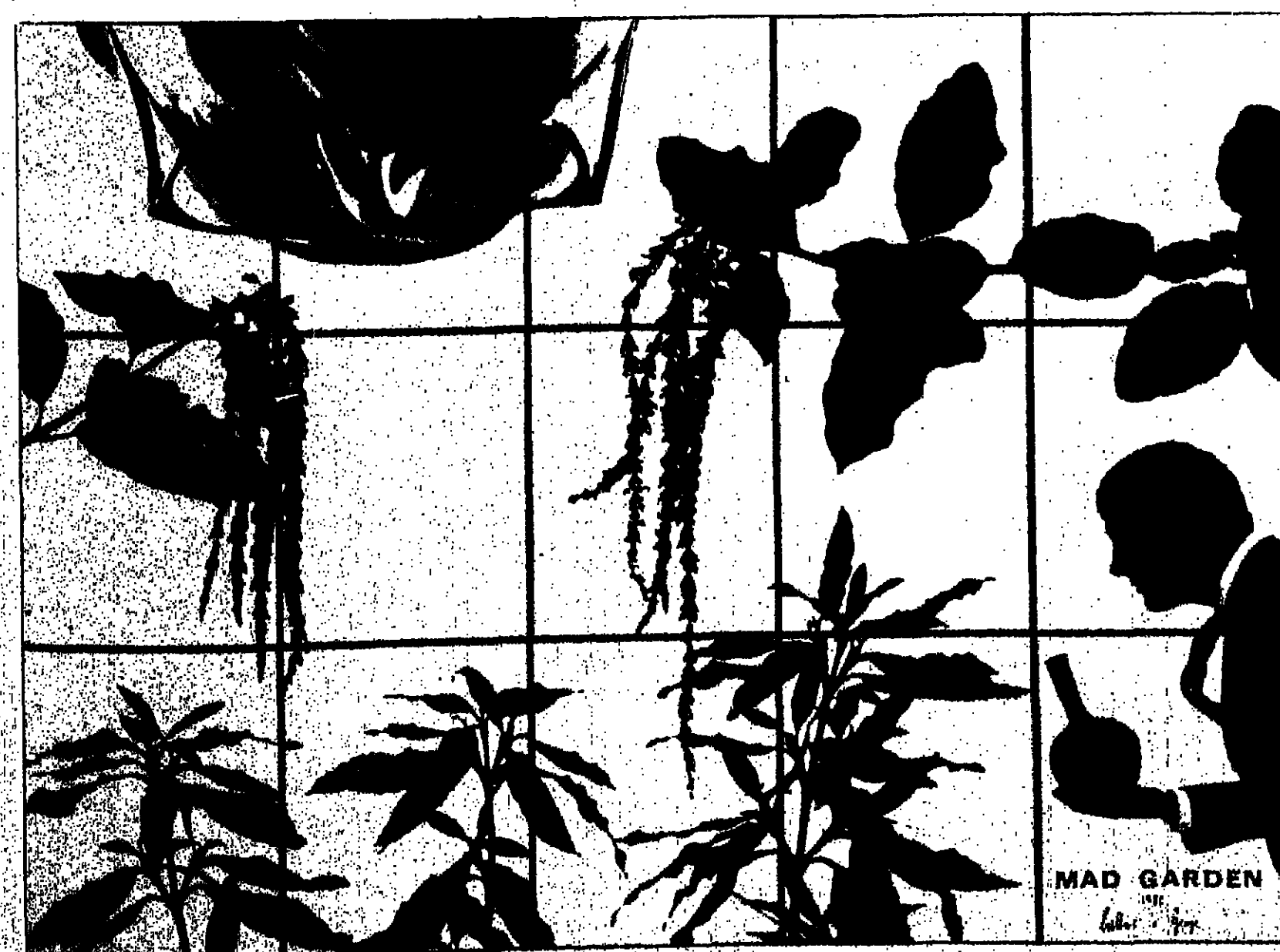
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TLS

The Times Literary Supplement

FRIDAY 31 OCTOBER 1986 No 4,361 80p

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A prima donna with honour

Wm Roger Louis

ROBERT RHODES JAMES
Anthony Eden
665pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £16.95.
0 297 78989 9
EVELYN SHUCKBURGH
Descent to Suez: Diaries 1951-56
Edited by John Charmley
380pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £14.95.
0 297 78937 7

The rehabilitation has begun. The onslaught continues. The historical reputation of Anthony Eden has reached a critical point. The publication of these two books coincides with the thirtieth anniversary of the Suez crisis: both are important works that will cause re-assessment and further controversy. Robert Rhodes James has written an authorized biography based on the Eden papers. Sir Evelyn Shuckburgh's diaries cover the years 1952-4 when he was Eden's Private Secretary, as well as 1955-6 when he was in charge of Middle Eastern affairs at the Foreign Office. At times it is difficult to believe one is reading about the same person. Both stress the element of Greek tragedy in Eden's downfall; but they reflect quite different interpretations.

Rhodes James is an experienced biographer, and *Anthony Eden* is his best book yet. Even those hostile to Eden will be astonished at the effectiveness of this rounded and perceptive narrative. Because the book gives full measure to Eden's life, Suez, as if an unfortunate incident, can be seen in the perspective of his achievement. Yet Suez occupies almost one third of a book of over 600 pages. Rhodes James has met the challenge head-on without flinching before damaging evidence. The chapters on Suez are based on both private and official records to which no other historian has had access.

Even though the immediate interest of this book will be the revelations about Suez, it would be unfair not to assess Rhodes James's account of Eden's boyhood at the spacious and elegant Windlestone Hall; the artistic temperament and volcanic disposition of his father; the selfishness and profligacy of his mother. His tutor at Eton described Eden as "distinctly intelligent without being brilliant". In January 1919 his commanding officer wrote: "A young but capable and energetic Brigade Major. Cool and resourceful in battle and possessed of a staying power his appearance doesn't suggest."

At Oxford Eden studied Persian and Arabic. He described Persian literature in his presidential address to the university's Asiatic Society: "It is the charm and melody of its verse, with its depths of mystic richness, its descriptive and varied vocabulary, the subtlety of its thought, couched in a language as beautiful as it is expressive, that gives it its unique power." He may have been aware of the richness and subtlety of language, but Rhodes James makes a telling remark about his subject's own powers of expression: "Eden's capacity for writing was limited, even on artistic subjects on which his knowledge and enthusiasm were manifest. His style was clear, but deficient in excitement, and sometimes came perilously close to the banal." The young Eden emerges as high-strung, complex and shy, constantly worried about his slender financial resources, and with a distinguished and brave military service during the First World War which was more of a formative experience for him than his years at Oxford. This then is the familiar Eden, but one whose personality is much more comprehensible because of the nuanced interpretation. The author writes of Eden's father and the creation of the garden at Windlestone: "The garden was soft, for William Eden hated harsh colours, and was scented with lavender, rosemary and sweet briar." Such are also the colour and scent of the book.

The colours may be soft, but they nevertheless portray finely a man of delicate but volatile temperament. "He seems to be two men", were the words of one of his subordinates: "one was charming, kind and deeply impressive - the other impossible." "Gusts of impatience and prone to constitutional irritability" was how another official summed up the character defect of hot temper. He was himself aware of his abusive petulance. "Don't forget that I am just a bloody prima donna", he once said with disarming candour.

Eden became Foreign Secretary at the age of thirty-eight. He had chosen the political "Curzon" route rather than that of the career diplomat. Rhodes James writes with verve about Eden and the House of Commons, and as pure biography this is the best part of the book, relating the development of his political philosophy (a "property-owning democracy"), his mastering of foreign affairs by dint of hard work, and his identification with the League of Nations, disarmament, and the quest for peace. "If he was generally perceived as the one who actually made the League work," writes Rhodes James, "this was the truth." The

passages on Neville Chamberlain and Eden, culminating in the latter's resignation, establish themes that later connect with the Suez crisis. Eden detected in Mussolini "a gangster mentality". Chamberlain wished to negotiate. Eden noted in his diary in February 1938:

N. C. became very vehement, more vehement than I have ever seen him, and strode up and down the room saying with great emphasis "Anthony, you have missed chance after chance. You simply cannot go on like this." I said, "Your methods are right if you have faith in the man you are negotiating with." N. C. replied, "I have."

Eden had absolutely no faith in Mussolini, just as later he distrusted Nasser. Indeed he drew comparisons between the two. But the disagreement about Mussolini was by no means the only reason why Eden resigned. Chamberlain also had slighted the United States; and he had disregarded the advice of the Foreign Office: "One of the real mysteries of 1956 is why Eden made the same mistakes as Chamberlain did in 1937-9."

How much substance was there behind the glamorous public image and bland speeches? Upon his resignation as Foreign Secretary, "Eden, by his manifest integrity and years of working, albeit vainly, for an ordered and reasonable world, had touched a particular chord. . . . The British people sensed something . . . honourable and brave. In this they were right." During the war Churchill, who had previously commented that Eden was a "lightweight", came to regard him as his "outstanding Minister". In 1940, at one of the critical moments of Britain's history, he became Secretary of State for War. He was one of the few in the Cabinet entrusted with the secrets gained by breaking the German Enigma cypher.

As Foreign Secretary from 1941 to 1945 he pursued his own goals, which were not by any means identical with Churchill's, and found himself more often than not in agreement with the leaders of the Labour Party, especially Attlee and Bevin. "The Conservative Party was not his spiritual home", Rhodes James writes, and Eden himself privately deplored "the sordid medium of Tory party politics". After the war the continuity of British foreign policy became a matter of public comment. "Hasn't Anthony Eden got far" was the Labour quip about Bevin. "The Importance of Being Anthony" was the Tory taunt. Like Bevin, Eden did not foresee Britain's destiny to be in Europe. "On the great issues of Western unity, strong defence and close links with

the Americans Bevin and Eden were in total agreement."

There was, however, an important difference that is not brought out in this biography. For various reasons, including pragmatic ones, Bevin did not believe in intervention. Rhodes James does not directly discuss the political wisdom, or otherwise, of pursuing a policy of non-intervention, but it is central to the broader aspects of the Suez controversy. Restraint sometimes requires as much courage and determination as intervention.

When Eden returned as Foreign Secretary in 1951, one of the major issues he inherited was Musaddiq's nationalization of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. "Certain clandestine steps", Rhodes James coyly writes, "were taken to hasten Musaddiq's downfall." This will not do. Was Eden directly involved in the planning that led to the M16-CIA intervention in Iran in 1953? Was he a prime mover or did he merely give the scheme his endorsement? "It was . . . a superbly concealed operation", Rhodes James tells us, and adds, as if lamenting that the secret was not kept, it was "to remain so for a long time". He then remarks provocatively: "This episode is perhaps not for the pure in heart and soul. . . . Certainly not. But he clearly believes that the toppling of the head of an independent state "resolved" the problem of "dictatorial and ruinous rule", without reflecting on the consequences of restoring the Shah or the long-term effect of intervention. In any case the overthrow of Musaddiq was a precedent for the operation against Nasser. On the seamy side of Suez - the alleged assassination attempt on Nasser - Rhodes James also reveals nothing. We know that by 1956 Eden "was now consumed with a real personal hatred of Nasser and all that he represented". Was the passion so strong that it caused him to say that he actually wished to have Nasser "murdered", as Anthony Nutting has recently stated? The reader will be none the wiser.

It would be unjust to pursue issues that lie beyond Rhodes James's purpose. The biography is rich in detail about Eden's uneasy and often tense relationship with "a rapidly ageing and obstinate Prime Minister", the successful marriage to Churchill's niece Clarissa in 1952, and, in the following year, the disastrous operation in which his bile duct was accidentally cut. Here and elsewhere Rhodes James emphasizes that there was no abuse of alcohol, drugs or hypnotics on Eden's part. "It is absurd to portray Eden as being from this point a sick

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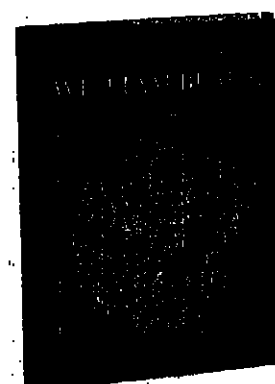
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man, dependent on drugs and stimulants. He was not." In 1954, Eden's greatest year of achievement, he helped to prevent a war in Indo-China that might have involved atomic weapons, he contributed to the reorganization of the Iranian oil industry, and he concluded an agreement with the Egyptian government whereby British troops would be withdrawn from the Canal Zone. He secured disengagement from Egypt despite Churchill's sensitivity to the charge of "scuttling" and "appeasement" and despite the protest of the "Suez group" within his own party. According to a contemporary account, "seldom... [was] a man more nervous than Eden when he was sitting in the Commons corridor waiting to be invited into the room to meet his bitter critics - and bitter they were". Yet Eden persevered. The agreement on Egypt in 1954 achieved the goal that he and Bevin before him had designed as the corner-stone of Britain's position in the Middle East. It marked the end of the period of British dominance and the beginning of a new era. Had Eden's career ended as Foreign Secretary in 1954, Rhodes James's assessment - "He brought honour and dignity, kindness and loyalty to the often grubby trade of politics" - which is the overall judgment of the book, would probably command hearty assent from all sides.

As it happened, Eden was responsible as Prime Minister (from April 1955) for one of the great catastrophes in Britain's Imperial history. Or was he? And was the Suez adventure such a bad idea after all? Rhodes James, for one, does not think that it was, but here he will probably not change many minds, either for or against. On the former question, however, he will cause fair-minded readers to see the crisis of June to December 1956 in a new light, new not in the sense of discovery but in the sense of being sustained by evidence from the Eden papers. The achievement of the book is to shift the responsibility for the failure of Suez from Eden, individually, to the Cabinet and military, collectively.

There are old scores to be settled. R. A. Butler (Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons) is one of the few to emerge with credit, "loyal, but doubtful and distant". Mountbatten (First Sea Lord) "did Eden the greatest disservice possible" - "virtually amounting to a dereliction of duty" - by not letting him know that he opposed the expedition and later by falsifying the historical record (for reasons that are not entirely clear other than that Eden later believed him to be "a congenial liar"). Harold Macmillan (Chancellor of the Exchequer from the outset was "the warlike fire-eater in the Cabinet" who saw "the extreme military usefulness of working closely with the Israelis" and who "wholeheartedly supported virtually any means of bringing Nasser down". Later Macmillan became "the key figure in the surrender". Selwyn Lloyd (Foreign Secretary) is described as a "competent lawyer" who "disliked foreigners" and who was "grossly overpromoted and out of his sphere". These assessments spill over marginally into the historiography of the subject. Rhodes James is at pains to correct Lloyd's account, *Suez 1956* (1979), and, especially (some will think unfairly), Anthony Nutting's *No End of a Lesson* (1967). These asides are rare. David Carlton's *Anthony Eden* (1981) is dismissed as "unfriendly". Hugh Thomas's classic account, *The Suez Affair* (1967), is not mentioned. Indeed it is difficult to judge from this skimpy notes and bibliography what Rhodes James has and has not read. For the most part the book stands on its own authority. But the disregard of conventional academic trappings must not be allowed to detract from the insight into personalities. The judgment of character is consistent.

Nasser is portrayed as the villain. After June 28, 1956, the date of the nationalization of the Suez Canal Company, he was in "a malignantly gloating mood". In Eden's eyes what Nasser had done "was a callous betrayal of his solemn pledges and agreements, which was despicable in itself, and he was clearly a man without integrity or reason". This view was not Eden's alone. Throughout the country there was outrage against Nasser, which Rhodes James places in Eden's perception:

What he did believe, and on this there is no doubt whatever, is that he would have the strong support of a significant majority of the British people, who

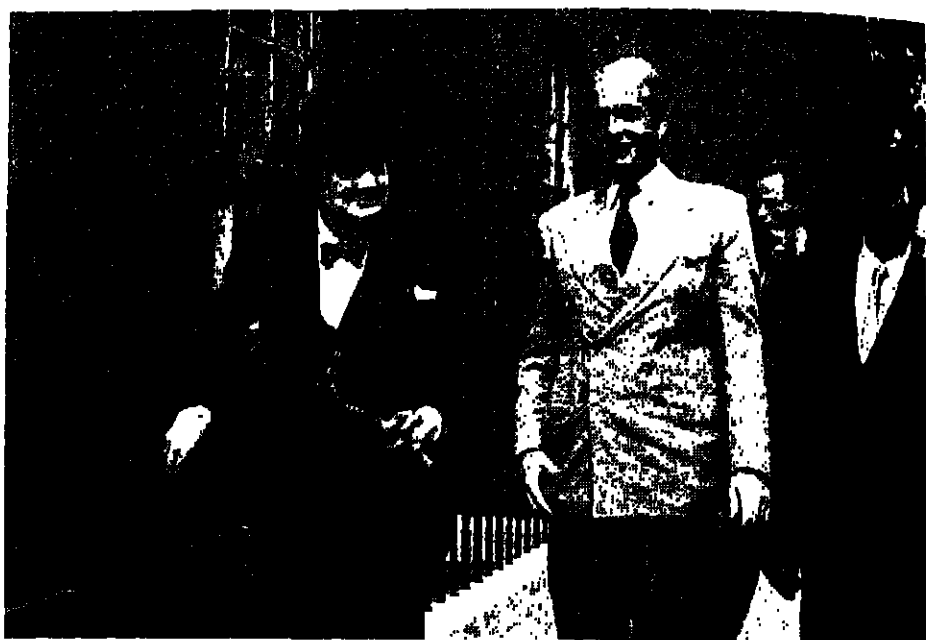
cared little for nieceties and wanted Nasser toppled and "our" Canal returned to its rightful owners. His almost mystical love-affair with his countrymen was never so graphically demonstrated. He believed that the British, like the French, were led up with humiliations from megalomaniacal tiny dictators. On this he was also right, although the majority was not to be as large as he believed it would be.

From the minutes of the Cabinet, quoted extensively by Rhodes James, it is also clear that Eden believed that he not merely represented but also guided the collective sentiment of his colleagues, and bore the responsibility for implementing the decision taken immediately after Nasser's nationalization, "to secure, by the use of force if necessary, the reversal of the Egyptian Government's action...".

The Cabinet established a committee, according to the official record, "as a kind of inner Cabinet... responsible for supervising the military operations and plans". The members of the "Egypt Committee" were the Prime Minister, the Lord President (Lord Salisbury), the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Macmillan), the Foreign Secretary (Lloyd), the Commonwealth Secretary (the Earl of Home) and the Minister of Defence (Sir Walter Monckton). Here Rhodes James presents vital new evidence. There was no pretence about using force as "a last resort". According to the minutes of July 30: "While our ultimate purpose was to place the Canal under international control, our immediate [purpose] was to bring about the downfall of the present Egyptian Government." At a further meeting on August 2, Macmillan raised the question of involving Israel: "It would be helpful if Egypt were faced with the possibility of a war on two fronts." At this stage Eden was concerned that a military operation might be seen as "anti-Arab, or even worse, pro-Israel". As the drama develops, he becomes exasperated with the military planners, then in desperation grasps at collusion with the French and Israelis, and finally meets his nemesis by underestimating the response of Eisenhower and John Foster Dulles. Throughout Eden remains entirely consistent, but increasingly an isolated and tragic figure. In the end he stands heroically alone, defeated, badly served by his advisers and colleagues, if not his friends.

Rhodes James is especially scathing about the military planners. "We do not plan to become involved in the permanent occupation of Egypt", the Chiefs of Staff reported on August 1. Nor did they wish to take any unnecessary risks. A week and a half later they presented "Plan Musketeer", recommending a full-scale seaborne assault on Alexandria after the destruction of the Egyptian Air Force. The Egypt Committee approved the plan. On September 7, however, the Chiefs of Staff reversed themselves. In "Musketeer Revise" they now urged an attack on Port Said. Here is a mystery that Rhodes James has not been able to solve. What was the reason for the volte-face that cost the British heavily in time and initiative? (Was it because of Lord Hallam, at that time First Lord of the Admiralty, or Selwyn Lloyd, both of whom wished to avoid civilian casualties at Alexandria?) "This was to prove a decisive turning point", Rhodes James writes. "All Eden's military and political experience warned him against Musketeer Revise, and he argued against it with great vehemence, and, according to one of the chiefs, with considerable rudeness and anger." Even Churchill during the war would not have overruled his military advisers on an issue of such magnitude. Eden angrily accepted the revised plan. In Rhodes James's judgment the Chiefs of Staff "let him down" because of the contradictory, cumbersome, and fatally slow military planning. One problem; as he points out, is that they knew of Israeli involvement only at a very late stage.

The political side of the operation was also marred, from Eden's own point of view, because of the formal agreement reached at Sèvres on October 24 between British, French and Israeli representatives co-ordinating military action against the Egyptians. Eden had wished nothing to be committed to paper. This incident is important among other reasons because it is damaging to Eden, and Rhodes James handles it judiciously. Eden was dismayed when he heard that Sir Patrick Dean of the Foreign Office had signed a document which became, in American parlance, the "smoking gun". Which he learned of the writ-



Churchill and Eden in 1954; the photograph is reproduced from Evelyn Shuckburgh's *Descent to Suez*. Diaries 1951-56, reviewed here.

ten agreement, he sent another Foreign Office official, Donald Logan, to Paris to retrieve it. Logan failed in his mission, but the Israeli Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion, honoured Eden's wish for the secret accord not to be divulged. Eden thus partially succeeded in covering his tracks. He destroyed the British record. The general credibility of the biography is enhanced by the forthright discussion of this and comparable matters.

On the issue of collusion, Rhodes James quotes extensively from Cabinet minutes Eden's explanation - or rationalization - of the secret agreement with the Israelis and French. On October 25 he revealed "The Plan" to the full Cabinet:

It now appeared... that the Israelis were, after all, advancing their military preparation with a view to making an attack upon Egypt. They evidently felt that the ambitions of Colonel Nasser's Government threatened their continued existence as an independent State and that they could not afford to wait for others to curb his expansionist policies. The Cabinet must therefore consider the situation which was likely to arise if hostilities broke out between Israel and Egypt and must judge whether it would necessitate Anglo-French intervention in this area...

We must face the risk that we should be accused of collusion with Israel. But this charge was liable to be brought against us in any event; for it could now be assumed that, if an Anglo-French operation were undertaken against Egypt, we should be unable to prevent the Israelis from launching a parallel attack themselves; and it was preferable that we should be seen to be holding the balance between Israel and Egypt rather than appear to be accepting Israeli co-operation in an attack on Egypt alone.

Perhaps there was an element of self-deception? In any case Rhodes James makes it clear that Eden was candid about the conspiracy and that none of the members of the Cabinet had any reason to believe that they had been misled. As for the conspiracy itself, Rhodes James writes that Eden, in taking the plunge, had moved from "an absolutely legitimate position to what was perilously close to being an illegitimate one".

Perilously close? This is about as close as Rhodes James comes to an unabashed stand on a matter that, as he says, divided families, broke up friendships, and remains a dangerous topic for dinner conversation to the present day. What of another sensitive issue: Eden's lying to the House of Commons, when he stated that there was "no foreknowledge" of the Israeli attack on Egypt? Here the approach is persuasively sympathetic: "There were those present who knew that it was not true. Most seriously of all, Eden himself knew it was not true. He was speaking under pressure, and he was ill; the mood of the House, to which he was always acutely sensitive, was dismissive rather than hostile."

Rhodes James does not reveal anything about the post-Nasser or collaborationist régime that would have been installed in Cairo, if indeed there was a plan. Could the Chiefs of Staff have avoided their nightmare of another occupation? Did Eden and his advisers have any firm ideas on the subject? Or were the long-range aims even murkier than they appeared to be at the time? There is also little new about the international or American dimension of the problem, though it should be mentioned that, in Rhodes James's demography, Dulles ranks close to Nasser. There are

some parting shots at Macmillan, who, Eden believed, was "excessively devoted to Anglo-American unity at all costs". The combined pressure of the Labour opposition and the United States, and the run on the pound, paralysed the will to continue. "Eden had been deserted by all his senior colleagues except Lloyd [Anthony] Head and [James] Stuart, and Macmillan's defection had been crucial." The underlying argument is not explicit, but implicitly the main point is that, with greater loyalty and collective determination, Suez need not have been a failure.

The theme of Sir Evelyn Shuckburgh's diaries, *Descent to Suez*, is that the drift towards Suez, or the collision course with the Arabs, was political folly of the highest order. This is not merely a retrospective judgment. It was a view he consistently held day in, day out, though with increasing despair, during the time he served as Eden's Private Secretary and then as Under-Secretary dealing with Middle Eastern affairs in the Foreign Office.

Shuckburgh comes from an English family which has lived between Southam and Davenry since before the Norman conquest. His father was Sir John Shuckburgh, the Colonial Office official responsible for Palestine in the interwar years (and who at one stage had a breakdown because of it). He himself was educated at Winchester and King's College, Cambridge. One of his first posts was in Egypt in 1937; he retired as Ambassador to Italy in 1969. In insight and as an insider's record his diaries are comparable in quality to those of Sir Alexander Cadogan, who in an earlier period dealt with many of the same problems. Like Cadogan's, the diaries served in part as a safety-valve for the pressure of the job. John Charmley deserves much credit for preparing them for publication.

Had Shuckburgh known that he would become involved in the same "insoluble problem" of Palestine that had caused his father's breakdown; he reflected later, he probably would not have entered the public service. In an introductory note he quotes one of his own first reactions to the Palestine problem in a letter to his father-in-law, Lord Esher, in 1938: "In Palestine we, with our own hands, are having to burn and explode villagers out of their village for the sake of what is, as usual, a theoretical obligation [the Balfour Declaration], an interpreted, often misinterpreted, text of twenty years ago, of which no one knows the meaning. And why are we doing it considering that even the Cabinet know it is unjust and suicidal?" There is thus early on a strong commitment to the Arab cause, and, if the view seems heady, it is no more so than many of the other comments in this book - for example Churchill explaining to Eden how to handle the Egyptians: "Rising from his chair, the old man advanced on Anthony with clenched fists, saying with the inimitable Churchill growl, 'Tell them that if we have any more of their cheek we will set the Jews on them and drive them into the gutter, from which they should never have emerged.'"

Some of the most fascinating parts of the diary are about Churchill's deterioration and Eden's frustration as her apparent, in which Shuckburgh saw the making of a tragedy. The diaries are full of the confusion and wrong on almost every

issue", Shuckburgh wrote about "the Old Man" in December 1953, "... hardly listens to argument and constantly reverts to wartime and post-war analogies." Speaking to Eden about "appeasement", Churchill said he never knew "that Munich was situated on the Nile". Another refrain was, "we have thrown away our glorious Empire, our wonderful Indian Empire, we have cast it away" - the connecting idea being the futility of propping up the French in Indo-China (some of the most absorbing sections of the diary deal with the Indo-China settlement of 1954). Eden at one time exploded: "This simply cannot go on: he is gaga; he cannot finish his sentences." Yet he did go on. Shuckburgh at times felt that Eden, whom he admired despite reservations about character and temperament, might never become Prime Minister. But finally the end came. "The great thing is that he has gone from the active scene and can be a great man again without damage", Shuckburgh wrote of Churchill's retirement. "It was not a Greek tragedy after all." At this stage Shuckburgh was optimistic about Eden's prospects: "He is filling out with security and confidence." One is reminded, however, of what Churchill said to Sir John Colville at about the same time, as related in Colville's *Fringes of Power* (1985): "he [Churchill] stared at me and said with vehemence: 'I don't believe Anthony can do it.'"

Churchill believed, according to Shuckburgh, that the Foreign Office was "riddled with Bevinism" on Middle East questions, in other words, "anti-Jewish". It is important to make Shuckburgh's own attitude clear. He was anti-Zionist (in the sense that he believed the creation of the State of Israel to have been a mistake) but not anti-Jewish. There are gloomy words about "Israeli neurosis, their sense of isolation and frustration", but he was not anti-Israel. He believed that the Arabs no less than the Israelis would have to make substantial concessions to bring about a settlement acceptable to both sides. Shuckburgh devoted a critical part of his official life to the attempt to find, in his own view, a fair-minded solution. In 1955 he and Francis Russell of the State Department worked together on a highly secret project known as "Alpha". Shuckburgh described it as "a full blueprint for a settlement, including territorial adjustments, compensations and resettlement of the refugees... and guarantees for both sides by the US and UK". In May 1955 he recorded the Israeli response: "no concessions of any sort... Keep off the grass." Project "Alpha" eventually became one of the casualties of Suez. For his own effort, Shuckburgh recorded ruefully, "I am regarded by the Jews and their friends as an evil counsellor to the Foreign Secretary."

The diaries throw new light on the private thoughts of British officials on two of the landmarks on the road to Suez, the Czech arms deal of September 1955 and the sacking of General Sir John Glubb by King Hussein of Jordan in April of the next year. "The folly and fragility of our Palestine policy is beginning to come home to roost at last", Shuckburgh wrote about Nasser's purchase of weapons from Czechoslovakia. "As long as the Russians played no role in the ME we were able to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds. But now they are obviously beginning to make a bid for Arab support." He relates a conversation between Macmillan (who served briefly as Foreign Secretary in the latter part of 1955) and Dulles in which Dulles mounted against the Russians "sitting on the airfields which we built", which was too much for Macmillan, and Nasser's duplicity, which was too much for Dulles: "Dulles could not bear the Egyptian ingratitude for all the money US has spent on her." Shuckburgh himself was by no means immune to the crescendo of the anti-Nasser mood. He now began to believe that he might have been mistaken in trying to reach agreement with the Egyptians. The diaries end on a despondent note: "Obviously my policy and efforts to have relations with Egypt have been all wrong." At the time of the Czech arms deal he had written, in words chosen deliberately to emphasize the importance of the event as a turning point: "We must first try to frighten Nasser; then to bribe him, and if neither works, get rid of him."

Glubb's dismissal as commander of the Arab Legion at the time seemed to be close to a national humiliation for the British because it

was commonly assumed, erroneously, that Nasser was behind it. The diaries make it clear that Glubb himself was part of the problem. Shuckburgh regarded him as so anti-Israel that he had lost his balance. "Alarmist", he had noted about Glubb's response to Israeli manoeuvres on the Jordan border in 1954, and, in April of the next year, "Glubb is still wildly excited, and asking us to adopt a strictly anti-Israeli policy which we cannot do." This is a repeated theme: "Glubb seems to be near panic." At the time of the actual dismissal, Shuckburgh wrote: "I don't think it means Hussein is sold to the Egyptians or Saudis. For A. E. it is a serious blow, and he will be jeered at in the House of Commons." This was another turning-point. Shuckburgh recorded that Eden now became "violently anti-Nasser". For Shuckburgh himself this was also the last straw. He wrote on March 8, 1956: "Today both we and the Americans really gave up hope of Nasser and began to look around for means of destroying him."

Shuckburgh's diaries thus support one of Rhodes James's principal themes: responsibility for the anti-Nasser movement has to be shared with many others, including the mandarins of the Foreign Office. It is also clear that to the end Eden had the support of Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick, the Permanent Under-Secretary, who told Shuckburgh during the actual crisis:

The PM was the only man in England who wanted the nation to survive; that all the rest of us have lost the will to live; that in two years' time Nasser will have deprived us of our oil, the sterling area fallen apart, no European defence possible, unemployment and unrest in the UK and our standard of living reduced to that of the Yugoslavs or Egyptians.

Though Shuckburgh does not say so, Kirkpatrick was probably one of the central figures in the conspiracy with the Israelis. Here a clear distinction has to be drawn. The anti-Nasser campaign was one thing; collusion was another. The latter was fatal. It destroyed Britain's position in the Middle East and, even more important, jeopardized, in the eyes of the British themselves, the integrity of their own government. Only a handful knew of the conspiracy. Shuckburgh learned of it at the time from the Minister of State, Anthony Nutting: "There was the fullest collusion with the Israelis. Selwyn Lloyd actually went to Paris incognito to meet Ben-Gurion with the French. It is true that he did not actually urge Ben-Gurion to make an attack, but he gave him to understand that we would not take a serious view. Later they even knew the date on which it was to take place. They deliberately deceived the Americans and everyone else."

The portrait of Eden in Shuckburgh's contemporary account is quite different from Rhodes James's historical reconstruction. Shuckburgh wrote about Eden at the time of Glubb's dismissal: "He seems to be completely disintegrated - petulant, irrelevant, provocative at the same time as being weak." This was not a sudden development but one that Shuckburgh had observed since Eden became Prime Minister. And, in perhaps the most poignant passage in the diaries, which stands as Shuckburgh's comment on the tragedy of it all: "He has in my opinion greatly changed in the last two years. He is far away, thinking largely about the effect he is making, not in any way strengthened in character, as I hoped, by the attainment of his ambition." One is led inescapably to the conclusion that the contemporary impression is closer to the mark than Rhodes James's romanticized version. As for Rhodes James's idea of collective responsibility and his vision of Eden as a tragic and isolated figure, here is how he appeared at the time through Shuckburgh's eyes: "A. E. had been broken down and gone off to Jamaica. This is the most extraordinary feature of the whole thing. Is he on his way out, has he had a nervous breakdown, is he mad? The captain leaves the sinking ship which he has steered personally on to the rocks."

Evelyn Shuckburgh's diaries are almost entirely private, though they do contain a few official records. Robert Rhodes James's book by contrast is based not only on Eden's private papers but also on official papers such as the minutes of the Cabinet, the proceedings of the Egypt Committee, and reports of the Chiefs of Staff. Will these records be accessible to other historians at the Public Record Office in January 1987?

A general's reputation

Keith Jeffery

DONALD SMYTHE
Pershing: General of the Armies
399pp. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
\$27.50.
025334381 X

The First World War lasted just long enough to secure the reputation of "Black Jack" Pershing, the commander of the American Expeditionary Force in France, as a successful fighting general. From late September 1918, the main American formation - Hunter Liggett's First Army - had for the first time become bogged down in a costly war of attrition similar to that experienced by the British and French all along the Western Front. Pershing's only answer was to pour in more of his unseasoned troops and exhort them to greater efforts. Happily (for the Americans), however, the German defence fell apart and in the last ten days of the war Liggett's troops advanced up to twenty miles. But it was just in time. In the opinion of Pershing's brilliant Director of Supplies, James G. Harbord, the Armistice saved the AEF from a logistical disaster. The Americans were apparently on the point of ceasing to fight for lack of supplies, held up by overloaded and understaffed lines of communication.

Pershing's greatest achievements were not so much military as political. Among his instructions when he left for Europe in May 1917 was the maintenance of a "separate and distinct" American army, "the identity of which must be preserved". Against all the odds - British, French and German - he succeeded. The Americans, who saw themselves (with some reason) as saviours of the Allied cause, and believing in their own absolute superiority, were determined at the least to take a position of equality with the other powers. Pershing

refused to be patronized and carefully hand-picked the fresh manpower which his allies so desperately demanded. He resisted calls for his troops to be split up into penny-packet reinforcements for the exhausted British and French. Allied frustrations were exacerbated by the apparent slowness of American troops to arrive at the front. After a year of war, Pershing had only one division capable of offensive action, and the Expeditionary Force as a whole had suffered fewer than two hundred casualties. It was not until the summer of 1918 that his units began to get involved in serious action. Yet even before this the mere arrival of fresh American troops in Europe - 250,000 a month at the end - provided an incalculable psychological boost, particularly for the hard-pressed French.

Donald Smythe's study - a useful companion to his 1973 volume on Pershing's early life - clearly demonstrates the extraordinary extent to which American policy in France depended on the general himself. Pershing was given a freedom of action reflecting that given to other Allied commanders in 1914, but which by 1917 they had irretrievably lost. Before he left for Europe he had just one short interview with President Wilson, when neither the war nor America's part in it was discussed. He received virtually unquestioning support from Newton D. Baker, Wilson's Secretary of War. Here too, perhaps, he was fortunate in the fact that the United States was only at war for nineteen months and that the civilians' confidence in his military judgment was never undermined. For Britain and France, too, the comparatively brief American involvement in the conflict postponed a painful reassessment of great power status for a quarter of a century. By 1919, when the Americans could have had a majority of troops on the Western Front, Pershing - or his successor - might well have claimed Foch's position as "Generalissimo" of all the Allied forces.

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The phantom of the opera speaks

Blake Morrison

CHARLES OSBORNE
Giving It Away: Memoirs of an unconvicted servant
 324pp. Seeker and Warburg. £15.
 0436354012

As a young man, Charles Osborne was many things: an aspiring singer, pianist and composer; a radio actor and announcer in Brisbane; a poet associated with the magazine *Burial*; a sales assistant in bookshops and musicshops in Melbourne and London; a translator; a writer of LP sleeve notes for EMI, Decca and RCA Victor; a music critic; a sales manager for Argo records; a commissionaire (in peaked cap) at the Academy Cinema, Oxford St; the author of books on Verdi and Ned Kelly; a film actor whose roles included the part of Pilot-Officer Foxlee in *The Dam Busters*; a reviewer (in anonymity days) for the *TLS*; above all, a repertory actor, active in both hemispheres, from Crewe and Tunbridge Wells to Nagasaki and Warrnambool. Most of these positions were short-lived but in sum they earned Osborne a freelance living in Bohemia and gave him a wide first-hand experience of the arts: he may not have fulfilled his ambition to be a great actor, but – engaging, cynical and gossipy – he was good company and made many friends. Unfortunately, the work Osborne eventually went on to do, after an interim working on the *London Magazine*, was that of Assistant Director and then Director of the Literature Department of the Arts Council of Great Britain, posts for which he was ill-fitted, which made him more enemies than friends, and on which he squandered twenty years.

Giving It Away is Osborne's autobiography and apology. The title will seem more than a bit ironic to all those writers and publishers who knocked unsuccessfully at his doors in 4 St James's Square and 105 Piccadilly over the years and for whom his chief notoriety lay not in a lachrymose private life-style (glimpses of which we are afforded here) but in a notable reluctance to part with public money. But the title also holds out the promise of revelations and indiscretions made possible by his departure from the Arts Council a year ago.

Certainly the book begins in confessional spirit. We learn as much as we could ever possibly wish to know of Osborne's early life: his mother's ambition and protectiveness, his father's "claret" kisses, his literary precociousness at primary school ("It infuriated the other little buggers"), his starting to drink wine at twelve, his graduation to High School at fourteen – "with, I seem to recall, the highest marks for that year in the State of Queensland". That he grew up quickly is further demonstrated by two steamy passages of adolescent sex where, overcoming a "natural reticence" and prejudice in the matter ("I find few descriptions more tedious than those of sex"), he recounts his seduction first at the hands (to say the least of it) of a young male teacher and choir leader, then by a friend of his mother, Frau Kunz (the name, and perhaps much else, is an invention), a Viennese Jewess in her late thirties. These experiences did little to foster a love of his homeland. Quickly deciding that native culture, Sidney Nolan apart, was "sheer muck", he left for London (via Italy) in 1953 and soon landed on his feet, not always the most natural posture for a young man coming from down under.

There follow Clive Jamesian stories of bed-sitterdom; a solitary Huxleyan experiment with mesallin; a brush with a poltergeist; repertory horror stories. Theatre work seems never to have been in short supply. "I continued to refuse offers from provincial reps", he tells us, adding: "It is a wonder to me now that my various agents bothered to persevere with me." Here, as elsewhere, Osborne's self-deprecations have a way of turning into boasts, letting it be clearly known that he was popular, sought-after, carelessly brilliant, etc. He is very pleased with himself, not always a pleasing attribute for the reader, however candid the arrogance ("Modesty is the fig-leaf of mediocrity," he quips), and however much the great and good – Auden, Larkin, Ian Hamilton, Judith Wright, Lord Goodman – seem to have shared his high opinion of himself. But

the self-confidence gives him the confidence to pass severe and often amusing judgments on others – on "that bloody Kurosawa", on that "old spoilsport" Jesus, on John Calder ("the most accomplished procrastinator since Elizabeth I"). The anecdotes come fast and hither. We learn, for example, that at the 1967 Poetry International Festival in London a drunk John Berryman "kept wetting and soiling his bed at the Sixty-Nine Hotel", that William Empson delivered a long introduction to a poem which he then forgot to read, and that Auden heckled Anne Sexton. And as well as character assassination, there are the occasional *bons mots*, some of them others' (Larkin on Lowell: "I don't know what all the fuss is about. He's just an American Heath-Stubbs"), some his own. The penultimate chapter is called simply "Name-Dropping".

But it is to the Arts Council chapters, naturally, that most readers will turn, and these are a great disappointment. At once the note of breezy indiscretion disappears and Osborne becomes muddled, defensive or simply philistine. After twenty years' administration, his considered view of the arts is that it divides into "gullers" and "guiled". The former are "minimally talented, self-proclaimed artists" – poets "incapable of actually making a poem", novelists who think "any old words truscly splattered on the page will do", "painters who – but why go on, for we all know they are the most successful confidence-men of all". The guiled are those "fearful of being thought ignorant or philistine, and those who are genuinely ignorant or philistine". Neither party is helped by current critics, a poor lot, theatre-reviewers especially, since they are "absolutely incapable of admitting that Edward Bond or David Mercer or John Arden or John Osborne or some other distinguished contemporary British playwright can possibly have written an absolute stinker". Osborne is in favour of arts subsidy – how could he be not? – but only up to a point, since he finds, for example, "something intrinsically sordid in adopting poetry as a profession. That leads to the churning out of poems . . .". Community Arts he describes as "that perversion of the aesthetic urge invented by bored arts administrators yearning to become social workers". He speaks of "hand-outs" (a loaded word) and of the "dribbling out" of hundreds of small grants. And at three separate points in the book he itemizes examples of grants to artists which he considers "a waste of public money", most of them, it happens, being travel grants for artists to broaden knowledge and techniques.

These are familiar prejudices, good fun perhaps in a *Daily Telegraph* leader, but depressing in the extreme coming from the man who once controlled the state subsidy of literature in this country: it is as if John Osborne or Kingsley Amis had really been in charge for the past twenty years. Typically myopic is his inability to observe any connection between the travel grants to authors that he so despises and his own trips abroad, a number of them in his capacity as an Arts Council Director – trips which he describes in detail and with much satisfaction here, evidently counting them as part of his intellectual development. But more dispiriting even than this is the constant begrudging tone, the mean-mindedness and scorsetting, the evasions and self-deceptions. At one point he applauds the "auto-didact's enthusiasm" he discerned in Jennie Lee; he himself seems to have an autodidact's jadedness: catholic in consumption of the arts, but incapable of feeling any real excitement about the literature for which he was responsible. The tone is world-weary, that of the flackcatcher for whom life has become an arduous process of warding off, out-manoeuvring, beating down.

The opposition is glimpsed from time to time, as Osborne tries to deal with some of the charges that were levelled at him during his period of office. That he was always more interested in music and the performing arts than in literature (Gavin Ewart once called him "the phantom of the opera"), that he underspent, that he allowed literature's share of the overall Arts Council budget to shrink disastrously, that he pursued his own career in Council time (no, he says, he wrote only between 8 and 10.30 each morning), that he never fought his corner or demanded enough of the cake – he wearily rehearses the old charges. Many of us will find his answers unsatisfactory. There is a

particularly inadequate account of the near destruction of the Literature Department last year, presented as a bolt from the blue ("The axe fell . . ."), rather than something to which Osborne's own policy had inexorably led. Other controversies are simply ducked: for instance, the allegations made by Michael Church – that Osborne stifled advisory panel suggestions, was cavalier in his treatment of clients, and failed to keep his house in good financial order – he describes simply as "too tediously parochial to be rehearsed in these pages". At other times he turns bullish, taking pride in his lack of clerical discretion (*Memoirs of an unconvicted servant* is his book's subtitle), claiming (an absurd charge) that it was not his own inertia but the "yelling of poets and writers for more money" which brought down the Arts Council's Literature Department, or suggesting that the Arts Council should have been "grateful" to have as its Literature Director "someone active and successful in the relevant art-form". (But do we think it useful for the Chairman of British Rail to be able to drive a train?)

Not all of Osborne's time as Director was wasted. He was right to give support to the *New Review*, a costly but excellent magazine, and he is right now to castigate those who forced it out of existence. He was also an excellent organizer of events like *Poetry International*, attracting big names from all over the world: organization of that kind, where gossip

and socializing are an essential requirement, he clearly had some talent for. Unfortunately he also brought the same approach to his administering of subsidy: whether or not a relevant body received financial support depended too heavily on whether it (or he or she) hit it off with Charles Osborne. He belonged to the last days of amateurism, where chaps who were (moderately) good at arts seemed to be those best fitted to become arts administrators, provided also that they could get along well with other chaps.

Osborne got along well with several people. Auden, Larkin and the rest – whose opinion cannot be easily discounted, but the qualities they liked in him – his wit, acidity, and anecdotalism – were precisely those which made him half-hearted about his work at the Arts Council: the unwritten *cri de coeur* of this book is that Osborne believed he too, given the right breaks, could have been a great poet (or actor or musician) but let envy and disappointment sap his energies as Director. This is what makes *Giving It Away* a sad and even tragic tale, for all its author's cheery self-regard: a personal tragedy, that a man of colour and imagination who could have lived happily in Bohemian circles allowed himself to become a Grey Suit, but also a public tragedy, that the state support of literature in this country should have been entrusted for so long and at such a crucial stage of development to someone manifestly unfit to administer it.

Red-blooded realist

Alexander Walker

MICHAEL POWELL
A Life in Movies
 705pp. Heinemann. £15.95.
 043459945 X

Not the least remarkable aspect of Michael Powell's memoirs is how they present the whole man in what is really half a life. In spite of the length of *A Life in Movies*, it ends (for now anyhow) with *The Red Shoes* in 1948 and Powell aged only forty-three. But so much experience of men, movies and women is crammed into its feet of total recall, rivaling the late Compton Mackenzie's, that the eighty-one-year-old author seems to have lived many lives. If not as a film-maker, he could plausibly have presented himself as a globe-trotter, conservationist, hotelier, novelist, even a womanizer.

He proclaims his Englishness with the vigour of a patial being quizzed by Immigration. ("I love England: I have mirrored England to the English.") But what singles the book out is its Continental tilt. And what makes it virtually unique among the memoirs of English film-makers is the open (but rarely chauvinist) relish for the beauty and company of women, on-screen and off, in bed and out of it. It is a red-blooded example in a usually thin-blooded genre: it will be read with pleasure by people who are not *cinéastes* and who want a "life", not simply an account of an art-form.

Powell's pleasures were cultivated without guilt – this also distances him from his English peers. Probably they were acquired on that cosmopolitan inter-war Riviera – his father (*le capitaine*) ran the Voile d'Or hotel – where he saw the European cinema of Clair, Eisenstein, Fritz Lang, Lubitsch and Seastrom flowering all round him. Thanks to a chance encounter at a party given by his father for the American unit at the nearby Victorine studios in 1926, "Mickey" wound up with Rex Ingram shooting *Mare Nostrum*. He gives a most valuable account, as well as a highly entertaining one, of that far-off silent era of expatriate Hollywoodites – photographer John F. Seltz, art director Henri Menessier, Alice Faye and Antonio Moreno. Likewise, Powell's description of Korda and the profligate way the Denham empire was ruled have historical importance. Korda sent him round the world by flying boat – "It was pure Jules Verne" – to find Burmese locations. Powell sent back cables from every "splash-down": "Could you imagine whole Persian Gulf to choose from cold?" "With westbound flying boat. Awaiting replacement from Karachi." That movie

was never made. One that was, *The Thief of Bagdad*, got under way with the briefest of remits: "I would like you, Mickey, to take Sabu and a film unit down to Cornwall and start making it." That was all: it was Korda's method of effectively cutting out the pedantic German director whom he had already signed. Powell convincingly stakes Korda's sometimes hazy claim to have aided the war effort by giving details of how the magnate made good his peace-time promise to Churchill that he would have a propaganda film (*The Lion Has Wings*) ready within a month of the start of the war.

His book also repairs some of the blanks in the puzzle of who did what in the Powell-Pressburger partnership, as in his account of his colleague announcing: "Excuse me, I am Pressburger" (spoken with a Continental bow), and then popping up like the dormouse out of the pot, holding a Denham script meeting spellbound with a reworked scenario read from a six-inch scroll of paper.

Powell had his chance to go to the United States. He admired American movies for their "lively energy". But Hollywood was another country: they did things differently there. He opted for independence – and kept it until his production company, The Archers, began losing money and then the confidence of Rank, who released *The Red Shoes* without even a première.

Powell's writing is full of delights. On entering Korda's office: "The furnishing of the room was civilized, by which I mean it was full of books in five languages." There is not one line of theory in this book (though there are quite a few misspellings that the publishers should have caught). It is bound to upset academic critics who have extravagantly lauded The Archers for setting their faces against realism and for attempting "daring experiments in reducing the importance of narrative": as for Christie put it in his recent *Arrows of Desire* (reviewed in the *TLS* of May 16).

Here is first-hand testimony that they did nothing of the kind. The Archers aimed in exactly the opposite direction from the one in which the "New Critics" are pulling their own bow-strings. *Colonel Blimp*, for example, springs directly out of a realist, narrative tradition going back to *One of Our Aircraft Is Missing*, where a titled middle-aged rear gunner, played by Godfrey Tearle, gave Hugh Burden's young idealist "skipper" a dressing-down based on his experience of life. David Lean, who was editing the film, had the scene dropped. "It's nothing to do with the plot; it's the sort of idea you could make a whole film about," he said. Powell adds facetiously: "So we did."

On the way to the Museum

R. S. Short

JACQUELINE BOGRAD WELD
The wayward Guggenheim
 493pp. Bodley Head. £15.
 0370310225

Few people were able to take Peggy Guggenheim seriously. Picasso did not. In the last weeks of the phoney war, she was legging it round the artists' studios of Paris buying "a picture a day" – the basis for the collection of surrealist and abstract art that, as the Peggy Guggenheim Museum in Venice, has become her monument. When Peggy arrived at Picasso's studio with her "shopping list", the painter ignored her and occupied himself with his other guests. Finally, ambling over to Peggy, he said contemptuously: "Lingerie is on the next floor."

Peggy Guggenheim is both a gift and a challenge to a biographer. She is a gift because she collected people as well as art and because, more mistress than muse, her life is also that of the avant-garde from Dada to Jackson Pollock. She is a challenge because she published three versions of her memoirs in her own lifetime. It would be difficult to surpass the brazen candour of *Out of This Century*, with its gallery of awful relations presiding over Peggy's New

York childhood, its trumpeting of the countless couplings and beddings that Peggy took for love affairs, and, not least, its unabashed acknowledgement of her ignorance in matters of art. Jacqueline Weld says that the memoirs display little introspection or elaboration, that people are presented as anecdotes, and facts are heaped one upon another in a breathless chronicle.

Weld's hefty biography thickens out the story with the reminiscences and impressions of many whose paths crossed Peggy's, including both the hurt and the appalled. And Weld's explanatory parentheses about movements, artists and background make it a serviceable history of the period from the 1920s to the 1950s in the arts. For all that, much of what she criticizes in the memoirs is true of her own book. And one can see why – with a subject so little given to reflection, so lacking an inner life, who seemed to exist only as a reflection of other people. All Peggy's efforts to make a legend out of her life, to become a testament to the attitudes of the Scott Fitzgerald generation, could not disguise her insubstantiality. But the anecdotes are racy and the pace is brisk. This is an untender portrait of Peggy – coarseness, nymphomania, stinginess, bulbous nose and all.

Weld begins by asking how it happened that,

Getting and spending

Gavin Ewart

MEREDITH EATHERINGTON-SMITH and
 JEREMY PILCHER
The 'It' Girls: Elinor Glyn, romantic novelist, and Lucy, Lady Duff Gordon, Lucile, the couturière
 244pp. Hamish Hamilton. £14.95.
 0241119502

"Would you like to sin with Elinor Glyn on a tiger skin? Or would you prefer to err with her on some other fur? There was a time when sex seemed something so complex. Mr Freud then employed words we never had heard of. He kept us on a string, we kept on wondering; but the seed of Sin now at last has been found by Elinor Glyn. In one word she defines this indefinable thing! She calls it IT, just simply IT – that is the word they're using now . . ." (Anon and Oscar Hammerstein II).

Two of the things for which Elinor Glyn is still famous are the novel *Three Weeks* (the *Lady Chatterley's Lover* of 1907) and the invention of "IT", the mysterious principle of sexual attraction, in 1926. The third is the long affair with Lord Curzon.

Three Weeks, though now seeming a bit ludicrous, has the force of something deeply felt (Puccini thought of setting it) and the benefit of having no plot. Books like *The Price of Things* are made ridiculous by the story; Shakespeare could overcome mistaken identity in bed, but not Glyn. Nevertheless, although a lush prose-writer and a believer in karma, she was no fool. "It is wiser to marry the life you like, because, after a little, the map doesn't matter." She also urged girls "to make yourself the round peg before you aspire to the round hole".

She and her sister (the other "IT" girl of the title) were born Lucy and Elinor Sutherland in 1862 and 1864 respectively, impoverished Canadians of Scots descent. Their father thought he had claims to the extinct Earldom of Duffus (a real Monty Python title); so from the start the girls had ideas about their station. Lucy became a great *courturière*, dressing Mrs. Willie James and Margot Asquith at Maison Lucile (and, in New York, "Vanderbilts and Astors foisted Lily Langtry and Fanny Brice in the fitting rooms"). She was practical and extrovert. Elinor was dreamy and romantic – yet were strong-willed and egocentric; both loved the eighteenth century. In the de Laszlo portrait Elinor looks quite noble (red hair, green eyes); Lucy, in the jacket photo, a wee bit silly. She had red hair too. They were jealous of one another, and both wildly extravagant in money matters.

Both married "well", taught to respect "men" and possessions. Elinor married

Clayton Glyn, always a spendthrift and latterly a brandy man (but the photo of him in 1913, captioned "Clayton, bloated and self-indulgent" makes him look fairly happy). Lucy married Sir Cosmo Duff Gordon, quiet and quite good at limiting Lucy's expenditure until she became too successful. He incurred great odium for leaving the Titanic in a partly filled lifeboat, ahead of the women and children – probably on Lucy's orders.

Their achievements: Elinor wrote thirty-eight books, almost all novels, but including an autobiography, self-favouring and probably wish-fulfilling. Did Clayton, on their honeymoon in Brighton, hire the public swimming-bath for two days "so that he might appreciate the beauty of the mermaid he had married", with Elinor swimming up and down nude, her waist-length red hair streaming behind her? Quite possibly. She had three extra-maritals – Seymour Wynne Finch, Lord Alastair Innes Ker (who inspired *Three Weeks*), and Lord Curzon. She made films of her books in Hollywood, including *It* (with Clara Bow, the red-haired "IT Girl" – described later by Elinor's granddaughter as "a little tart"). She also fancied herself as a director. She discovered that tigers have "IT" (same colouring as hers). Mostly, young men had it, some of them comen.

Lucy revolutionized women's underwear, dispensing with flannel and corsets, making it light and attractive – in tune with the high-born lady's penchant for receiving lovers in the afternoon, wearing a teagown ("a teagle"). "Immoral dressing", it was called, revealing legs. She dressed Elinor – and stage and society in London, Paris, New York; invented the mannequin and the fashion show; and "temperamental" dressing, so that pig or horse-faced ladies could fancy they were ethereal, in dresses called "The Desire Of The Eyes" or "Fervid Inflorescence". Beverley Nichols very cattily said that, to match her temperament, she should wear sauteen shorts.

She did the costumes for shows, most notably *The Merry Widow* (1907); believed she was an incarnation of Catherine the Great; followed The New Thought; invented coloured hair (as in the King's Road); had an entourage of gay young designers. She was not as nice as Elinor. Moral: to get ahead in marriage or business you have to be a bit of a shit.

Markova Remembers by Alicia Markova (192pp. Hamish Hamilton. £12.95. 0241119537) contains the prima ballerina's recollections of sixty-five years in the theatre; from her professional début as Lillian Alicia Marks at the age of ten to her retirement in 1974. Dame Alicia's working relationships with such influential figures as Diaghilev, Fokine, Massine, de Valois, Rambert, Ashton and Dolin are generously illustrated with over 200 photographs.

while far richer heiresses spent their time buying dresses and marrying playboys, this woman collected the greatest art and artists of her day. The answer seems to be: without much deliberation, if not quite by accident. While living it up with the expatriate crowd in Paris in the 1920s, Peggy had shown no interest in the visual arts. Her idea in 1937 of opening an art gallery was the whim of a thirty-nine-year-old millionairess; it could easily have been a publishing house. Hitherto she had used sex and booze as weapons of revolt against her stuffy background. Modern art, especially her first love, Surrealism – dangerous, irreligious, immoral – was another such provocation. And she could play at onepmanship with her cultural-philanthropist uncles, Solomon and Simon.

That she exhibited such an impressive repertoire of artists both at the Guggenheim Jeune gallery in Cork Street and subsequently at "Art of this century" in New York and that her own collection was of such quality were due mainly to the formidable series of mentors who guided her choice, drew up and revised her "lists": Marcel Duchamp, André Breton, Herbert Read, Nellie van Doesburg, Howard Putzel, Alfred Barr, James Johnson Sweeney and Mondrian among others. She was always heavily advised and, to that extent, her taste was always other people's taste. Nevertheless, as Thomas Messer of the Guggenheim Museum has said: "Peggy must be given credit for her advisers. If she found good advisers, she could have found a fool." Another reason why she collected so well was that great art at the outbreak of the war was cheap and Peggy had no qualms about taking advantage of the desperate need of the artists, often refugees, that she patronized. With a fortune a fraction under a million dollars, Peggy was never "the richest woman in the world", as an Italian newspaper once exuberantly put it. In terms of

wealth as the Guggenheims understood it, she was a poor relation – her father had drowned young with the Titanic after unwisely trying to make his own fortune outside the family firm.

Peggy's greatest years were between 1942 and 1947, when she was running her museum-gallery, "Art of this century", extravagantly installed by Frederick Kiesler in a pair of lofts at 30 West 57th Street. She had returned to the United States in 1940 in the company of leading European artists in exile – Mondrian, Léger, Ernst, Miró, Masson, Chagall, Lipchitz, Gabo, Breton. At last, the young generation of American artists, who had hitherto only glimpsed these shadowy heroes from afar, could meet them, find them to be human, not Gods, and dare to emulate them. At the gallery and at the parties she gave in her Hale House apartment, Peggy mixed surrealists and abstractionists, the European greats and up-and-coming New Yorkers. She became a catalyst for that great shift of artistic leadership from Paris to New York that coincided with America's emergence as a superpower in a world devastated by war. Encouraged by Putzel, Barr and Sweeney, and by this time acquiring her own ability to recognize conviction and vitality in a picture, Peggy declared that her gallery would only serve its purpose if it succeeded in "serving the future instead of recording the past". Alongside the European avant-garde of the interwar years, she began showing unrecognized American artists such as Robert Motherwell, Mark Rothko, Clifford Still, William Bazotes and Hans Hoffman. Above all, she became the champion of Jackson Pollock. In a decade when American museums and collectors fell over themselves to accept anything that came from Europe but still refused to acknowledge prophets in their own country, Peggy gave their chance to these and many other then unknowns – a virtual Who's Who of post-war American art.

October and November Books

Fiction

WHIRLWIND *James Clavell*

The magnificent successor to KING RAT, TAI-PAN, SHOGUN and NOBLE HOUSE – a monumental tale of revolutionary turmoil in Iran and of a small group of people desperately racing against time. £12.95

THE OTHER SIDE OF PARADISE *Noel Barber*

From the well-loved author of A FAREWELL TO FRANCE and TANAMERA, a dramatic love story set on a fabulous but ill-fated South Pacific Island. 'A compelling saga' *Daily Mail* £10.95

ROUGH WOOING *Nigel Tranter*

The third novel in the trilogy about David Lindsay and David Beaton, recreating the wars and intrigues, passions and treachery of sixteenth century Scotland under James V. £10.95

NO WAY BACK *Ken Royce*

George Bulman and Willie 'Spider' Scott make a welcome reappearance in this thrilling tale of a killer on the loose, bent on avenging his girlfriend's murder. £9.95

Non-Fiction

THE CELTS *Frank Delaney*

A major and fascinating study of our ancestors the Celts, examining their origins, powerful mythology and brutal rites, their words, music and exquisite art. The companion volume to a BBC2 television series. Illustrated £14.95

PAINTED MOUNTAINS *Stephen Venables*

The account of two mountaineering expeditions to the unclimbed 6000-metre peaks of Kashmir. 'An absolute delight' *Chris Bonington*. Illustrated £12.95

THE SWORDBEARERS *Correlli Barnett*

Barnett's classic portrait of four national Commanders-in-Chief who shaped the course of the First World War. An excellent and provocative book. *A J P Taylor*. Paperback £9.95

Hodder & Stoughton

Protecting the child

Mary Warnock

ORALEE WACHTER
No More Secrets for Me
62pp. Puffin. Paperback, £1.25.
014039255
MICHELE ELLIOTT
The Willow Street Kids: It's your right to be safe
104pp. Deutsch. £5.50.
0233 979549
BOB FRANKLIN (Editor)
The Rights of Children
237pp. Oxford: Blackwell, £22.50 (paperback, £8.95).
0631 14711 X
JUDITH ENNEW
The Sexual Exploitation of Children
163pp. Polity. £19.50 (paperback, £5.95).
0745602304

The two children's books in this group are in the form of stories, both aimed at a readership aged about seven or eight. The Puffin book was first published in the United States, and this shows a bit, but not too much. The four stories in it are short and separate from each other. Michele Elliott claims that her stories are true. She has worked them into a continuous narrative, centred on a particular class at school under the charge of a sensible, loving and pregnant teacher. The message to children from both books is the same: you have a right to the privacy of your own body, and you must assert that right. To grow-ups there is a further message: listen to children, and believe them, when they steel themselves to talk about what may be sexual abuse.

It is difficult to judge how effective these stories will be. What appears to an adult a somewhat patronizing approach (especially the vocabulary of "kids") may not seem so to children, though the cloying, cosy/jolly tone of a school-story is an uneasy vehicle for a message that cannot be cosy, if it is to work. But they will probably do a reasonably good job on the shelves of the primary school library. Michele Elliott, incidentally, has written for adults on the same subject (*Preventing Child Sexual Assault: A practical guide to talking to children*, Bedford Square Press/NCVO, 1985). The children's books emphasize a child's "right to protection". The collection of essays edited by Bob Franklin suggests a far wider range of moral rights for children, rights which he argues in his introduction ought to be incorporated in law so as to become legal rights, but are not so yet. He regards children, like blacks and women, as an oppressed "minority". They, like the aged, are, he holds, the victims of "ageism". This view is reflected

more or less throughout the volume.

Franklin's own contribution is an essay on the political rights of children, at present denied them. He acknowledges that the initial reaction of readers will be to ridicule his views, and so a reviewer must at all costs avoid seeming to do so. But it is hard to take wholly seriously an argument about the rights of children based on the evils of Paternalism. He is against such an attitude: "The notion that it is acceptable to force children to do things which they currently object to doing, but which they will subsequently endorse, has proved popular with paternalists." It certainly has, and always will. Fathers (and mothers) are extremely likely to continue to force their children to clean their teeth, wash their hands, wipe their feet, do their geography prep properly or practise their musical instruments, on the grounds that later these children will see the point of such things, and enforce them, or some of them, on their own children. As long as fathers beget children, such paternalism will persist. It will not wither away, though Franklin thinks it should. He argues that "childhood" is an artificial and recent concept which we could more or less do without. It is a concept, he holds, concerned not with chronology but with power, children being thought of as essentially weak and in need of manipulation or teaching. Over-enthusiasm for such a view (virtually a cliché of our time) obscures the facts of the case. Children simply are more ignorant, less competent and less reliable than adults. Obviously this leaves open the question of when to deem childhood to have ended. But that we may, by custom or law, extend childhood unduly; that the line between a child and an adult is difficult to draw, does not entail that no distinction whatever should be drawn. There is much to be said for preserving childhood, though perhaps for a shorter time than at present. Though childhood may be frustrating, no one is a child

forever; all children look forward to a better future. Meanwhile, even if children are not perfectly happy, they are, in virtue of being children, permitted a time for learning and for trying things out.

Franklin wants children, all of them, to be politically enfranchised. Rather engagingly he suggests that this wouldn't make much difference, because many of the younger ones would not in fact exercise their right to vote. Other contributors to the volume have other views, more or less eccentric. Richard Ives, on children's sexual rights, is sensible and reasonable, arguing like the authors of the two children's books, that one important right that children have is to be protected from sexual assault and exploitation.

Judith Ennew's book is more scholarly, and deserves serious attention. She is concerned solely with the question of sexual exploitation. She discusses what is to count as exploitation, what is to count as a child, and how much



A detail from Jimmy Forsyth's photograph "Girl with hoola-hoop, 1957". It is taken from his Scotswood Road (128pp. Bloodaxe, £6.95, 1852 24041).

Holding the baby

Peter Lomas

D. W. WINNICOTT
Home Is Where We Start From: Essays by a psychoanalyst
287pp. Penguin. Paperback, £4.95.
0140226095
NEVILLE SYMINGTON
The Analytic Experience: Lectures from the Tavistock
347pp. Free Association Books, 26 Freegrove Road, London N7 9RQ. £22.50 (paperback, £8.95).
0946960291

D. W. Winnicott worked for forty years as a paediatrician at the Paddington Green Children's Hospital, where his intuitive gifts gave him a remarkable insight into mother-baby relationships. On the basis of this understanding, and of his experience as a psychoanalyst, he produced work of such originality that his reputation probably surpasses that of his mentor and rival, Melanie Klein. His persistent loyalty to Klein must have required a great deal of ingenuity, for Winnicott's views are, in important respects, completely opposed to hers. For example, whereas Klein believes that the infant brings about its own downfall by virtue of an innate destructiveness, Winnicott focuses on the unhappy consequences when the mother fails to give her child the security necessary to its psychic health. Another difference between the two is that where Klein's prose is overloaded with jargon, Winnicott argues his thesis in terms that are mostly accessible to the ordinary reader.

To my mind though, he overstates his case. While there is no doubt that a failure to "hold" a baby in a way that gives security will inevitably have untoward consequences, it also supplies us with a poignant image on which we may be tempted to project all the traumas which life presents. In rather the same way that John Bowlby puts the fear of God into mothers who take a break from their children, Winnicott, by means of his moving and compelling writings, can easily incline mothers to doubt their capacity to handle their children with sensitivity and

When he died in 1971, Winnicott left behind eighty unpublished papers. *Home Is Where We Start From* contains some of these, together with others not readily available elsewhere. Several of them deal with themes – creativity, adolescence, motherhood, the "False Self" and so on – on which Winnicott published extensively and to justified acclaim. Others are on subjects not directly connected with his central interests. These include the monarchy, democracy, the Pill, feminism and the Berlin Wall. He is such a fertile thinker that one should not entirely dismiss any of his writings, yet this collection is a mixed bag. Some of the essays are taken from drafts of informal talks and, lacking the presence of the man himself, they fall short of his better writings.

Whereas Winnicott seeks to convey original ideas, Neville Symington, who writes in a more modest style, is content to distill the thoughts of others. *The Analytic Experience* is based on lectures given at the Tavistock Clinic, and consists of an exposition of psychoanalysis and its subsequent modifications, particularly those effected by the "British Object-relations School", including Klein, Winnicott, Fairbairn, Bowlby and Wilfred Bion. This is no dry exegesis; Symington writes with clarity, good humour, compassion and wide practical experience. He has the gift of condensing com-

plex arguments without undue simplification. Bion, with the possible exception of Jacques Lacan, is the most obscure writer in the field, yet the author manages to give a creditable account of his work in the space of a few pages, and his critique of Klein, who, he believes, does not take into account the child's tragic recognition of *la condition humaine*, is a cogent one.

Although Symington is primarily concerned to present the views of others, his own pre-dilections do come through. It is not by chance that the most sympathetic of his portraits is that of Freud's favourite pupil, the Hungarian analyst Sandor Ferenczi ("the forgotten innovator"), whose ideas eventually led to the ostracism reserved by Freud for those who strayed from the true faith. Ferenczi's belief that spontaneity and openness are healing, and that narcissism and rigidity are the enemies of good practice, is implicit in much of *The Analytic Experience*.

Contemporary psychotherapeutic literature can be roughly divided into two styles, the humanistic which conveys some of the drama of reality but lacks rigour; and the analytic which is logically sound but reduces human relationships to depersonalized fragments. Symington succeeds in avoiding both these extremes.

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Jealousy

To hear her talk about her friends
Is like glimpsing across dark gardens
Their lighted room, from which you are
Excluded; such kindness reigns there
In the bright warmth; you see a burst
Of laughter that you cannot hear.

Or it is being shown a blurred
Photograph of some unreachable
Good place; *look, there are olive trees*
And the beach where we swam – we slept
In that white house – You finger it.
The glamour of a life not yours.

DICK DAVIS

Unnatural selection

Alan Charig

FRED HOYLE and CHANDRA WICKRAMASINGHE
Archaeopteryx, the Primordial Bird: A case of fossil forgery
135pp. Christopher Davies. £10.95.
0715406655

Fred Hoyle and Chandra Wickramasinghe are noted for – among other things – their works on mathematics and astronomy. Their first venture into palaeontology tells of *Archaeopteryx*, the earliest bird and the most famous and (probably) most valuable fossil in the world. The original specimen was found in Bavaria in 1861 and was bought the following year by the British Museum (now the Natural History Museum). Its importance lies in its antiquity (some 150 million years), making the origin of birds much earlier than previously supposed (65 million years); in its presentation of an intermediate stage in the evolution of birds from reptiles, thus confirming the reality of organic evolution; and in the time of its discovery, only two years after Darwin published *Origin of Species*. Lying on the two sides of a split slab of fine-grained limestone, it consists of a skeleton resembling that of a magpie-sized dinosaur but with the clear impressions of feathers around the fore-limbs and long lizard-like tail.

Hoyle and Wickramasinghe state unequivocally that, while the bones are genuine – a skeleton of the small dinosaur *Compsognathus* – the feather impressions are a deliberate fake. These ideas they first put forward in a series of articles in the *British Journal of Photography* in the spring of 1985. The forger, so they say, "gauged [sic] out" shallow depressions in the surface of the slabs around the dinosaur bones, filled them with a cement made from ground-up limestone, and then pressed modern feathers into that cement while it was still wet. He was probably the local Medical Officer, Dr

Karl Häberlein, and his motives were purely financial. The authors claim also that Richard Owen (who became the first Superintendent of the Natural History Museum in 1881 and was later knighted) knew that *Archaeopteryx* was counterfeit and had probably commissioned the forgery himself; he nevertheless recommended its purchase to the Trustees of the British Museum so that he might later "discover" the fraud and thereby put his evolutionist enemies Darwin and Huxley into an untenable position. (So why did he never spring his trap?) Hoyle and Wickramasinghe even suggest that the unexpected death of the German zoologist Andreas Wagner in 1861 may have been connected with his doubts as to the authenticity of *Archaeopteryx*. They further allege that the present staff of the Natural History Museum, including the reviewer, are party to the fraud and are determined to prevent its exposure; they have even faked proof of the authenticity of *Archaeopteryx* and have tried to hinder the authors' access to the fossil.

All these claims are demonstrably untrue. The direct "evidence" for the alleged forgery – like much else in the book – is based on a plethora of faulty observations, incorrect data, wrong interpretations, untrue statements and misleading arguments; which, in turn, are due to sheer carelessness, lack of knowledge of the relevant subjects, false logic and a fertile imagination. The inspiration for all this is a diehard refusal to admit any facts that do not accord with the authors' preconceived ideas. (Such "evidence" is easy to demolish, but this is not the place to do it.) The authors even resort to misquotation to bolster their case; for example, they change the meaning of a statement completely by adding four words in parentheses, and they entirely transform the significance of another author's diagram by omitting a crucial word from its caption.

In any case, the cement-layer forgery hypothesis was conclusively refuted in June of this year by the Museum team (*Science*, Volume 232, pp 622–626), to the satisfaction of

every scientist – if not to that of Hoyle and Wickramasinghe. We demonstrated the presence, on the feathered areas on the two sides of the split slab, of exactly matching dendrites (branching inorganic growths) and exactly matching hair-line cracks; the latter were newly discovered in the Museum's laboratories by the use of ultra-violet photography. This shows the absence of any cement layer. Hoyle and Wickramasinghe nevertheless reject this evidence of the fossil's authenticity, for the pictures in *Science* "could not possibly in our opinion show such fine details as a hairline crack unless they were artificially enhanced, as for example by the use of a mapping pen". In other words, the Museum staff are charged with gross dishonesty. Another allegedly dishonest act "a year or two ago" was the removal of the braincase, supposedly to hide the fact that that too was a fake.

In these circumstances it is peculiarly satisfying to note that a photograph taken in 1895, reproduced by Hoyle and Wickramasinghe, shows one of the "forged" hair-line cracks even better than does the picture published by the Museum team; and one of the authors' own photographs shows another, admittedly rather faintly. Were they too "enhanced"? If so, certainly not by us, for we had no access to those photographs. The absence of any cement layer has recently been confirmed by several observations (as yet unpublished) by a leading authority on rock mechanics. As for the braincase, actually a partial skull, it was removed to facilitate preparation for research purposes and is readily available for inspection.

Hoyle and Wickramasinghe are not content merely to discredit the London *Archaeopteryx*, the holotype of the species (ie, the original specimen); they are anxious to discount every fossil bird and mammal that antedates the Tertiary. Thus they do not doubt that the famous Berlin *Archaeopteryx* and the original feather found a few months before the type are also counterfeit. The three specimens found or recognized in the present century are, accord-

ing to them, without satisfactory evidence of feathers (untrue in two cases). The beautiful feathers that are found in Lower Cretaceous rocks in Catalonia and Victoria (Australia) are conveniently ignored, and the abundant evidence of bird skeletons in Upper Cretaceous rocks is likewise rejected. As for the long record of Mesozoic mammals – two-thirds of all mammalian history – for them it does not exist.

Why do Hoyle and Wickramasinghe make this violent assault upon such a virtually unassailable bastion of well-established knowledge? Their motive is made clear by the first chapter in their book, devoted to an exposition of their views on organic evolution. They accept evolution; they are not Creationists. On the other hand, they believe that evolution proceeds, not by natural selection as proposed by Darwin, but through the invasion of viruses from outer space, introducing new genes into the chromosomes of living organisms. Most of these viruses arrive in the "genetic storms" that bombard the Earth periodically; and this means that evolution proceeds, not gradually, but in sudden bursts. Such ideas are incompatible in their eyes with the existence of "transitional forms" like *Archaeopteryx* in the Late Jurassic. Thus Hoyle and Wickramasinghe have a powerful reason for wishing to discredit it and all other such creatures; which, naturally enough, will cause the discerning reader to view their hypothesis with extreme caution.

No one, of course, would have paid any attention to the bizarre allegations in this book if they had not been linked with a name as well known as that of Sir Fred Hoyle. On p 116 the authors quote Huxley, writing of Owen: "I do not believe that in the whole history of science there is a case of (anyone) of reputation getting himself into such a . . . position." And on pp 120–121 they write, "we have always felt that if people, including scientists, want to think wrongly on an issue then it is their privilege to do so. To take a different view is to take a road that inevitably leads to intolerance, in our opinion." Further comment is unnecessary.

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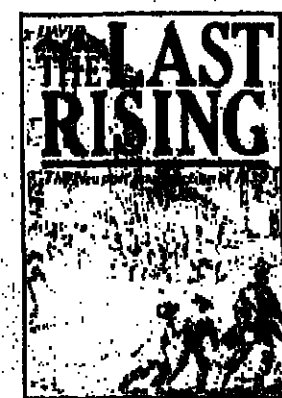
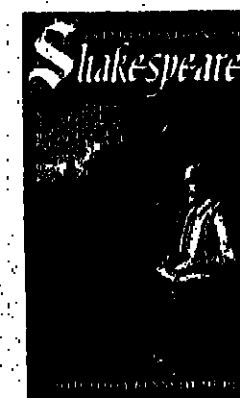
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In March 1983, President Reagan appealed to the same scientific community that gave America nuclear weapons "to turn their great talents to the cause of mankind and world peace: to give us the means of rendering their nuclear weapons impotent and obsolete". This was the essence of the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) and it is hard to fault - as a sentiment. But a rather different approach was suggested by the derisory label the press attached to the President's proposal. The idea of "Star Wars" was to develop an impenetrable ballistic missile defense (BMD) system, an impermeable shield that would rely largely on space-based weapons. And as so often with unexceptionable ends, it was the means that created problems and the debate about their implications was soon engaged.

This policy debate is the most important since 1945-55, when the fundamentals of Western security policy were argued out. Part of its importance lies in the unprecedented cost of the SDI programme, but its real significance lies in the intention to extend the arms race into space and in the challenge that it poses to the strategic concept of "mutual assured destruction" that has been the basis of US nuclear policy for the past thirty years. The debate is also important because it provides an opportunity to examine, the largely unquestioned assumptions that shaped Western foreign and defence policy in the first post-war decade. Many understand the significance of this debate but there is insufficient recognition of its urgency.

The development of BMD systems goes back some thirty years. At that time the available technology decreed that such systems would rely on disabling the missile as it re-entered the atmosphere. This meant that the defences could easily be saturated and precluded the possibility of missile-light defence; the task of BMD was further complicated by the introduction of warheads comprising multiple independently targeted re-entry vehicles (MIRV). The novelty of the SDI lies in the idea that emerging technologies allow one to contemplate attacking the missile during all four

phases of its trajectory: boost, post-boost, mid-course and terminal. Systems to attack the missile during its first three phases would depend completely on space-based components.

The boost phase, when the missile rises through the atmosphere for some three to five minutes, offers the greatest opportunities. At this stage the missile still has all its warheads aboard, its initial location is known; it is moving relatively slowly, and the heat from its main motors facilitates tracking. However, attenuation of directed energy beams by the atmosphere makes it harder to disable the missile during this phase. The second best opportunity comes at the post-boost phase (three to six minutes), when the missile is dispensing its MIRVs and there is still the chance of destroying more than one warhead with a single blow, and here the absence of atmosphere simplifies disablement. There is no atmosphere at the mid-course stage (about twenty minutes), but its absence creates the major problem of discriminating between live warheads and even more numerous decoys, which would share the same flight profile and signature. The braking effect of the atmosphere filters out these decoys in the terminal phase (about one minute), and the SDI envisages that the number of surviving warheads would be small enough for advanced technology to be able to destroy most, if not all of them.

The attraction of attacking the missile throughout its trajectory is that it allows a multi-layered defence, each of which can be less than perfect. For example, if each layer disabled 85 per cent of the remaining warheads, a five-layered system (two focused in the terminal phase) would allow through less than one warhead in 10,000. However, this compounding effect relies on each layer being totally self-sufficient, with no sharing of sensors or weapon systems. Meanwhile, it will be several years before we know whether an 85 per cent kill rate is even theoretically feasible, and a perfectly respectable 50 per cent rate would allow through over 300 warheads. Much of the debate therefore focuses on technological feasibility, and this mainly concerns the first three layers of defence.

Few dispute that intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), as presently designed, can be targeted during their boost phase, and the argument concentrates on the means of disabling them at this stage. The proponents of Star Wars talk of exotic (and yet to be developed) systems built around chemical lasers, particle beams, kinetic energy weapons, or the X-ray laser powered by a nuclear explosion. When challenged on the operational practicability of these theoretically feasible systems, they draw analogies with the development of nuclear energy and space flight. The critics note that neither of these programmes had an adversary intent on defeating the programme's objectives. They postulate various ways in which the Soviets could relatively cheaply protect their missiles against attack, such as shortening the boost phase, spinning the missile, or using ablative coatings. They also point to the vulnerability of space-based systems to Soviet counter-measures. The proponents have responded by proposing space-based mirrors to redirect the beams of earth-based directed energy weapons, and "pop-up" weapon systems that are only deployed in space on warning of attack.

Judgments on technological feasibility depend largely on how optimistically one views emerging technologies, and their very nature means the answers will not be known for at least five to ten years. There is general agreement on this; and on two other points. One is the critical importance of boost-phase intercept to the concept of an impermeable defence. The interactive nature of the SDI means that if this layer is ineffective, the other layers of the defence will be swamped. There is also agreement on the centrality of the automated battle management system. The necessary computer hardware appears to be within reach, but all agree that the associated software will pose unprecedented demands and many believe that it will be impossible to produce error-free or reliable/redundant programs of the size and complexity required.

Another aspect of the debate is the cost of developing and deploying a space-based strategic defence. There are no official estimates apart from \$27-530 billion for research



This photograph of a Lithuanian boy taken by Anatas Sutkus is from Another Russia: Through the eyes of the new Soviet photographers (176pp. Thames and Hudson. £12.95. 0 500 54114 0).

spread over about seven years, but the Director of the SDI Office has admitted that the full costs could go as high as \$500 billion. Unofficial estimates of what it would cost have steadily risen and the majority now fall between \$500 billion and \$1,000 billion in current dollars, with some going above the \$1 trillion mark. But these are not the only costs. If faced by an effective BMD system, the Soviets will seek to outflank it by increasing their non-ballistic strike capability. There is already talk of a parallel Air Defence Initiative to counter the "air-breathing" Soviet threat, and an ADI will cost over \$100 billion. It will also be necessary to maintain, operate and replace this panoply of strategic defence, and the cost of doing so has been estimated as at least \$100 billion a year. By comparison, the last four annual defence budgets have oscillated around the \$300 billion mark.

Arguments about costs and technological feasibility are inevitably spongy, because SDI research is still exploring new possibilities, and operational deployment lies ten, twenty or even thirty years ahead. The fact that discussion focuses on these aspects reflects a bias in the Washington debate on defence procurement and does not denote their relative importance. Before one asks "Will it work?" or "How much will it cost?" there comes the question "Is it necessary or even desirable?" These are clearly the most important questions. They are also the most immediate ones, because the flood of money into research and development threatens to bypass this aspect of the debate. Unfortunately, objective discussion is hampered by Ronald Reagan's having already given his own intuitive answer. Support for the SDI has become a test of loyalty to the President and, in the minds of many, to the United States of America.

To the extent that the desirability of the SDI is discussed, argument takes place within the parameters of the strategic nuclear debate, whose origins go back to the 1950s. To perceive the full implications of the President's proposal, one must understand the sociology of that debate. In the wake of the First World War, war was seen as too important to leave to generals and was taken over by the politicians who, having done little better in the Second World War, left the field to the academics. Theorizing on the implications and use of nuclear weapons became the preserve of a new breed of strategist. They reasoned from first principles, using game theory and axiomatic logic. The end-product was nuclear deterrence theory.

To oversimplify, deterrence theory focused on how to prevent Soviet aggression by threatening to inflict unacceptable punishment on the Soviet homeland, a problem that dominated Western strategic theorizing during most of the 1950s. A credible deterrent depended on the certainty of US retribution, and towards the end of the decade, as the Soviets began to acquire the capability to strike directly at the United States, American attention turned to guarding against the danger of a pre-meditated, disarming strike, of the kind attempted by the Japanese at Pearl Harbor.

The emerging Soviet capability also directed attention to a new danger that stemmed from the nature of nuclear weapons, and did not depend on aggressive intentions. In a con-

frontation, the advantage of getting in the first blow with nuclear weapons was so great that a prudent national leader might be prompted to launch a nuclear strike on the mere suspicion that the other side was contemplating war. This inherent pressure to pre-empt in a crisis introduced a new concern for the "stability" of the emerging strategic balance. The simple requirement that Soviet aggression be deterred came, for some, to be qualified by the somewhat contradictory requirement that Russia be reassured that the United States would not itself launch a first strike.

The intellectual basis of the US arms control establishment was founded on this recognition of the need for mutual reassurance, but it also accepted the tenets of deterrence theory. Thus strategic stability was to be achieved by both sides having an assured "second strike" (or, more properly, strike second) capability, which would ensure that enough weapons could survive a first strike to be able to inflict unacceptable damage on the initiator. However, an assured second-strike capability is only one of the requirements of reassurance doctrine. It also assumes that both sides will avoid weapons systems that might deprive the other of such a capability. Failing that, reassurance theory becomes a recipe for arms racing, as each side seeks to ensure that it can absorb a first strike and still retaliate.

While mutual reassurance provides the basis of Western arms control theory, it does not of itself determine US arms control policy, which is an amalgam of deterrence and reassurance theories. There is an inherent tension between the requirements of "credibility" and "stability", and experience shows that, when push comes to shove, deterrence invariably wins out over reassurance.

The distinction between the deterrents and the reassurers reflects the deep divisions in the American body politic concerning the desirability of arms control rather than US military superiority. These divisions go back to the earliest arguments concerning the atom bomb in 1945 and, despite lip service to the idea that defence programme and arms control should work together to advance national security, the reality has been very different. In a perceptive analysis (*Strategic Statecraft: Nuclear Weapons and Arms Control*, 1984), that illuminates the deep ambivalence of US attitudes towards arms control, Michael Krepon distinguishes two opposing camps: the arms control strategists and the nuclear weapon strategists. While the ideologically minded in these two camps were never able to communicate with each other, the operational pragmatists had been able to work together. These pragmatists were essentially the same as the reassurers and deterrenters, and it was the amalgam of these two viewpoints that formed the basis of US arms control policy through the 1960s and into the mid-1970s.

However, as America gradually lost the clear nuclear pre-eminence it had long enjoyed, so did this political centre erode and the two camps drew further apart. The nuclear weapon strategists became increasingly influential and, within that camp, the ideologues' view became increasingly important. Arms control negotiations came to be seen, increasingly, not as a co-operative endeavour with the Soviet Union, but as a contest where

one side wins at the expense of the other. By the time of the talks in 1981-3 on intermediate nuclear forces (INF) and strategic arms reduction (START), the clear purpose of the negotiations for the Reagan administration was to placate domestic and allied opinion and to embarrass the Soviet Union, rather than to reach agreement on reducing the level of armaments.

The ideologues of the arms control camp had meanwhile broken with the pragmatists on the valid grounds that high theory had merely resulted in higher force levels. Instead, they proposed a general freeze on nuclear weapons, an idea that proved unexpectedly popular. In a separate development, the Catholic bishops of America published a pastoral letter which contained major reservations on the morality of nuclear deterrence as the basis of national security and, in the eyes of many, implicitly condemned it. It was against this background that President Reagan made his Star Wars speech in March, 1983.

There is no reason to doubt his sincerity in deploring that the security of American interests should have to depend on the threat of being willing to commit national suicide. Nevertheless, the speech's primary purpose was political. With its vision of a non-nuclear world, it outflanked the Freeze Movement while offering a positive response to the bishops' moral doubts. The SDI would be defensive, not offensive. It would restore America's territorial inviolability, exploiting US ingenuity and high technology to turn space itself into a defence shield. It touched all the right buttons like security, enterprise, strength and virtue. It satisfied both wings of the nuclear weapon strategists, the ideologues who believed in US military superiority and those pragmatists who thought the Soviets were cheating at arms control. And it offered a technological bonanza to scientists and industry alike. As politics, it was brilliant. The only group left out were the pragmatists of the arms control camp.

One of the difficulties in discussing the SDI is that the term now embraces at least two contradictory concepts. There is Reagan's original idea, commonly referred to as SDI-1, which envisages a space-based leak-proof defence of the United States, thereby obviating the need to rely on nuclear deterrence for the nation's defence. A less ambitious version (SDI-2) would emphasize space-based systems to ensure an effective defence of the ICBM fields, thereby enhancing nuclear deterrence, which would continue at the core of national security. There is also a third option implicit in the original concept, which is to combine a space-based shield with a full complement of strategic offensive missiles, thereby restoring the military superiority that America enjoyed in the 1950s. And beyond that lies the possibility of using space-based weapons to threaten the Soviet Union directly. Besides these specific concepts, the SDI provides opportunities to a variety of special interests. These range from those who view it as a way of disrupting the arms control process and others who see its potential as a bargaining chip to be exchanged for cuts in Soviet heavy missiles, to those who favour the colonization of space. It is therefore hard to disentangle the genuine from the spurious in arguments supporting the SDI.

The official line on SDI-1 is that the ultimate goal is the elimination of strategic nuclear weapons, and that during the next ten years the United States will press for radical reductions in the nuclear arsenals of both sides. Depending on the successful development of new defence technologies, there would then be a period of transition towards reliance on defensive systems; this transition would be a co-operative endeavour with the Soviet Union. The Reagan administration does not, however, make clear how the Soviets are to co-operate in this endeavour, let alone why. A basic assumption of the SDI is that the United States has an unmatched capacity for technological innovation, which implies that for many years the Soviets will lack a defensive shield. Another basic assumption is that the Soviets are not to be trusted. The administration line is that when the Soviets see that their ICBMs have lost their utility as a pre-emptive force, they will reduce their offensive force and will be intent on defence. Meanwhile,

the Secretary of Defense has claimed that the Soviets would not see any threat in a US space-based BMD system, since they know that the United States would never launch a first strike.

While there may be members of the present administration who still believe in the possibility of SDI-1, it seems inconceivable that any of them could really believe this transitional scenario. However, implausible or not, it does head off accusations that the SDI is just another way of pursuing the Republican Party's campaign objective of restoring America's military superiority. Furthermore, by insisting that the objective is defence of people and not missiles, it avoids powerful counter-arguments that are implicit in deterrence and reassurance theory.

SDI-2 does not avoid these arguments, which were aired exhaustively in the debate over anti-ballistic missile (ABM) systems in the second half of the 1960s and were finally silenced by the 1972 treaty that severely restricted the deployment of ABM. The main argument advanced in favour of defending the ICBM force is that it will enhance deterrence by removing the possibility of a disarming strike on the United States and with it the threat of various coercive scenarios. SDI-2 should also improve the credibility of extended deterrence against attacks on Nato and Japan and, as a by-product, such a system would be a hedge against terrorist blackmail and limit the devastation of an accidental attack. It is further argued that it will allow America to probe the potential of emerging technologies, thereby providing a hedge against a Soviet breakout in BMD. But the essence of SDI-2 is to reinforce the existing policy known as Mutual Assured Destruction, or MAD.

Senior members of the administration try not to acknowledge the existence of SDI-2. They stress that the SDI is about protecting people and not missiles, and that the United States is not seeking military superiority. Despite these injunctions, proponents of the SDI rely heavily on the argument that space-based systems will reduce the threat of a disarming strike, thereby enhancing deterrence. But they also depend on the argument that the present policy is immoral by labelling MAD "offense-reliant" whereas SDI-2 will be "defense-reliant".

As nuclear deterrence is claimed to have kept the peace since the Second World War and MAD has been the basis of Western policy for twenty-five years, the lay person may well ask what has changed to justify this reevaluation. The answer lies in the "Window of Vulnerability" discovered by the Committee on the Present Danger in the second half of the 1970s. The Committee argued that the Soviets would soon have the capability to destroy all US ICBM with a disarming strike, using only part of the Soviet ICBM force. Although this would leave the submarine arm of the US deterrent triad untouched, the United States would be deterred from massive retaliation because of the Soviet capability to strike back at American cities. There are obvious problems with this argument, but it is typical of the "worst case" analysis favoured by the nuclear weapon strategists. It rests on a particular interpretation of Soviet behaviour since the 1972 signing of the ABM treaty and the accord on strategic arms limitations (SALT I), an interpretation that is flawed in its central assumption and its understanding of the evidence.

It assumes that the Soviet ICBM programme is driven by an offensive strategy of pre-emptive strikes designed to limit the US capacity to damage the Soviet Union. This same assumption underlies the administration's claim that SD-1 will cause the Soviets to shift their emphasis away from offensive systems. Unfortunately the assumption is long outdated. The Soviets did have an offensive damage-limiting strategy in the 1960s; but a shift in doctrine concerning the likely nature of a world war required the complete restructuring of Soviet military objectives and the move from a policy of intercontinental nuclear pre-emption to one of launch on warning. The evidence of this shift emerged in the period 1966-75, was recognized as such by a growing number of Western analysts in the 1970s and 1980s, and has now been formally acknowledged in an authoritative Soviet military

publication: M. A. Gureev, *M. V. Frunze - Voennoy teoretik* (M. V. Frunze - Military Theoretician, Moscow: Voenizdat, 1985), pp 239-40.

The worst-case interpretation focuses solely on the fourth generation of Soviet "heavy" ICBMs and claims that the number and accuracy of their MIRVed warheads is evidence of an offensive damage-limiting strategy. This interpretation does not acknowledge that it was the United States that chose to exclude MIRVs from the SALT I limits and that the United States developed and deployed MIRVed ICBMs first, with the Soviets following suit later. It fails to recognize that in 1970, by which time the SALT process had taken hold, the Soviets halted the deployment of their third-generation missiles in mid-course which (*inter alia*) reduced the planned number of heavy missiles by 40 per cent.

This decision resulted in a force of just over 1,000 third-generation ICBMs targeted on North America, matching the 1,000-strong Minuteman force in numbers but not in quality, while another 360 variable-range ballistic missiles (which were included in the SALT totals) were targeted on the periphery of the Soviet Union. Again as the result of SALT, the deployment rate of fourth-generation missiles was less than half that of the third-generation rate, and even this deployment was cut short at 60 per cent of the planned programme, because of the limits agreed at SALT II in 1979. The result was that over 500 of the relatively primitive third-generation systems were not replaced.

These repeated curtailments of planned and existing programmes do not support the notion of a Soviet drive to acquire the capability for a disarming strike. Nor do the Soviet proposals at the START talks, which offered further cuts in their MIRVed ICBM force while allowing the US MX programme to go ahead. Soviet behaviour does, however, support the other evidence of a fundamental shift in the late 1960s of Soviet policy regarding arms control

and the requirement for ICBM. The characteristics of the fourth-generation missiles are irrelevant to this argument, since they are compatible with both strategies.

The third strand of this worst-case interpretation is that the Soviets are poised to break out of the ABM treaty. This claim rests partly on improvements to the ABM system around Moscow, which was first deployed in the mid-1960s. These improvements, which are allowed by the treaty, bring the capability of these defences abreast of that of the US Sprint system that was discontinued in the mid-1970s as being ineffective. There is also the evidence of Soviet research on ABM weapons, which the United States likewise pursues and is allowed by the treaty. But the claim is largely based on the evidence that the Soviets are building a new radar, which the nuclear weapon strategists claim is for BMD battle management. In fact, it is one of several new early-warning radars required by the new strategic policy of launch-on-warning. While its specific location contravenes the technical provisions of the treaty, it does not undermine the objective of limiting the deployment of ABM systems and it furthers the objective of crisis stability.

It is on the basis of this flawed interpretation of developments since 1970 that the nuclear weapon strategists argue that arms control and the SALT process have failed to constrain the Soviets, requiring a radical response like the SDI. For the ideologues of that camp, this is largely a debating point, because they are fundamentally opposed to the hostage concept that underlies MAD. A Manichean view of Russia and doubts about a democracy's capacity to make tough decisions persuade them that Russia is not hold hostage, while America is. They do not believe that the US threat of nuclear retaliation, possibly leading to national suicide, is credible, and they envisage a range of improbable scenarios where the Soviet Union might be tempted to test the United States or call its bluff. This extreme form of

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worst-case analysis is legitimized by deterrence theory and the search for chinks in the armour of assured retaliation. The field is dominated by "tough-minded" theorists, and a course of enemy action need only be conceivable for it to be included in the calculus of threat.

The arms controllers' case against the SDI builds on their original arguments in favour of the 1972 ABM treaty. They reject the argument that the concept of mutual assured destruction is immoral, noting that the two sides' nuclear arsenals are facts of modern life and one can not therefore "renounce" MAD. As a policy, MAD merely acknowledges the existing situation and seeks to manage the consequences. Given this *de facto* security régime, attempts by one side to deploy effective defences against ballistic missiles must lead the other side to develop the means to saturate or outflank those defences. BMD would therefore thwart any attempt to limit the size of offensive inventories through arms control and would cause arms race instability, thereby making war more likely.

Beyond these points carried forward from the earlier ABM debate, there are new objections relating specifically to the SDI. One is the offensive potential of space-based weapons against Soviet territory and assets around the world. Another is the option it provides the United States for a disarming strike on Russia, without fear of retaliation. While a leak-proof defence against the full Soviet strategic missile arsenal is unlikely to be possible, space-based BMD could be effective against Soviet retaliation in the wake of a disarming strike. US missiles that will enter service shortly will provide the capability for such a strike.

More serious in its implications than either of these objections is the question of how the Soviets will respond if the United States embarks on the process of assembling BMD-related platforms in space. Will they sit back and watch the United States build a system that has such adverse potential for Russia and could spell the ultimate demise of the Soviet State? Or will they try and prevent it from happening, using force if necessary? And if they use force, how will the United States respond?

These and other criticisms are being voiced increasingly in Congress, and the doubts extend to more mundane matters, such as the incoherence of the programme's objectives. The administration has been criticized for being unable to resolve its internal disagreement on whether it is realistic (or politic) to aim

for SDI-1, or whether it would be better to focus on SDI-2 or even to concentrate on developing a ground-based BMD system designed to disable missiles in their terminal phase. The administration announced the "Nitz criteria" of cost-effectiveness and survivability that any space-based BMD system would have to meet, but these are already being undercut by senior officials in the Defense Department. There is a glaring contradiction between the lofty concept of an orderly transition from offence-reliant deterrence to space-based defence over some twenty years, and the administration's efforts to decompose the ABM treaty and its threat to jettison SALT.

Given the genesis of the SDI and the well-publicized schemes in this administration, the confusion is not surprising. But as Star Wars comes to resemble a giant open-ended programme of research with no clear objective, the wisdom of the decision to embark on this path becomes increasingly suspect. Significant numbers of scientists and engineers, including those working in government laboratories, have come out against the programme. In May 1986, more than half the science faculties at 109 US universities and research centres pledged not to accept SDI research funds. These 3,700 professors and senior researchers include 57 per cent of the combined faculties of the top twenty physics departments and fifteen Nobel laureates. In June, 1,600 scientists and engineers from government and industrial laboratories urged Congress to curb the SDI programme since an SDI shield was unreachable in the foreseeable future. Congress has responded to these doubts and criticism by cutting next year's SDI budget by about one third.

Congress is also concerned about the effects of the SDI on the Western alliance, but the allies' opinions are mixed and muddled, as are the endless arguments about coupling and decoupling. In strategic theory, a leak-proof shield of North America would restore the credibility of extended deterrence, which declares that a Soviet attack on Europe or Japan would evoke a US nuclear strike on Russia. In practical political terms, however, the SDI could encourage American isolationism and the withdrawal of troops from Europe. If the Soviet Union were also to acquire a leak-proof shield, then there could be no extended deterrence and Europe would become a nuclear battlefield. But that would hardly be different from the *de facto* situation today, where the pressure on both superpowers to treat the other's territory as sanctuary is very strong. Whatever theory may say about escalation ladders, there remains a qualitative distinction between nuclear war in Europe and intercontinental escalation. Inevitably, the allies' military concerns are somewhat contradictory but their political concerns are straightforward. They are worried about breaching the ABM treaty, the unravelling of arms control, and a prospective increase in East-West tension. Such developments would be unwelcome to almost all America's allies.

Some of the books under review can be classified in terms of Michael Krepon's taxonomy of the arms control debate, others not. *Strategic Defenses* is one of the latter and comprises two reports, one of BMD technology (325 pp), the other on the closely related subject of anti-satellite weapons (146 pp). Both were produced by the Office of Technology Assessment, an arm of the US Congress whose function is the preparation of non-partisan reports, which in this case were requested by both the Senate and the House. This comprehensive and well-illustrated book provides an overview of the technological and policy issues, summarizing the arguments on both sides, and the appendices include key excerpts from official statements on BMD and a useful summary of the Administration's position. The only real criticism is that the reports are so even-handed, in quoting the opposing viewpoints that their conclusions tend to be bland.

Weapons in Space is another comprehensive analysis of the issues underlying the SDI. It was originally published as a special issue of *Daedalus*, the journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and comprises sixteen articles by twenty-one authors. The book succeeds in providing an objective over-

view, but the arguments are more sharply focused. The authors, all of them well known in their fields and most of them practitioners as well as theorists, are drawn from pragmatists of the two camps, but the majority are arms control strategists. Between them, these two books will provide the serious policy analyst with all the facts and most of the arguments he or she needs to make sensible judgments about SDI.

A somewhat different approach is to be found in *War in Space* by Christopher Lee, the BBC's defence correspondent. The book is really about the steadily increasing military use of space since the late 1950s, and the SDI comes as the natural denouement of that process. It contains a great deal of information presented clearly and objectively, and provides a good overview. Lee is unexpectedly sceptical of the SALT process and the prospects for superpower arms control, which he describes as "close to being an obsolescent concept", and he proposes that reconnaissance satellites should be operated by Regional Observation Groups (ie, non-superpower) to monitor military deployments within a region and to facilitate crisis management. Lastly, there is *The Price of Peace* by Lawrence Freedman, Professor of War Studies at King's College, London. The penultimate piece of this collection of his articles provides an excellent summary of the issues underlying the SDI. Freedman chooses not to discuss the broader implications of placing weapons in space, but within the rather narrow parameters he has set himself this is the best kind of critical analysis. On the basis of the actions and statements of its proponents, he concludes that SDI-1 will never be more than the President's "vision", and that by mid-1985 the administration had recognized that fact, even though it remained unwilling to admit it.

Three of the books come within the camp of the nuclear weapon strategists. Much the most substantial, *Strategic Defense*, is by Keith Payne, Vice-President of a small hard-line Washington think-tank. It is the best and clearest public presentation of the case for the SDI. Payne addresses most of the main objections head on and there is a particularly useful chapter on the problems of stability. It is a sophisticated argument, and while he side-steps many of the difficulties, as when he explains away the contradiction between SDI-1 and SDI-2 as a matter of time scales, the book is an important contribution to the debate. Its major flaw lies in the outdated assumptions about Soviet military doctrine and strategic thought. These provide the central premiss for many of his arguments, particularly those concerning Soviet requirements for offensive missiles, their approach to arms control, and what he considers to be the failure of the SALT process. His analysis of the Soviet missile programme illustrates how the selective use of evidence leads to false conclusions, a problem that bedevils much of Western analysis involving Soviet military policy.

Robert Jastrow's book *How to Make Nuclear Weapons Obsolete* is the most superficial of the three, providing a Pollyanna-ish survey of the issues, in which he glosses over the problems touched on in this review. As a scientist, he is good at explaining technology to the layperson, but when he applies this simplifying process to the complex problems of the SDI the results are profoundly misleading. He seeks the moral high ground by dedicating his book to "the men and women who want to see nuclear weapons disappear from the face of the earth". Alun Chalfont's book *Star Wars: Suicide or survival?*, which has a foreword written by Reagan's science adviser, argues that our survival does depend on the SDI. The book, however, is as much a disquisition on the defence of the West and how to handle the Russians as an analysis of the SDI, and clarity suffers in the process. The argument is informed by a particular view of Western military weakness and Soviet military strength and urge to expansion, and he chastises those who don't share his judgments on these matters, including Michael Howard. The rambling discussion and his penchant for extraneous detail make the argument hard to follow and nowhere does he draw together his ideas on the SDI. However, in a subsequent article ("SDI in Context", *US Naval Institute Proceedings*, April 1986) Chalfont does state

his conclusions, which amount to a massive non-sequitur. They follow the official US line of claiming that the SDI offers a real possibility of a substantial reduction in nuclear arms without accompanying instability, a decreased dependence on suicidal nuclear retaliation, and a reduced chance of a successful Soviet conventional attack in Europe.

Star Wars, edited by E. P. Thompson, falls within the ideological wing of the arms controllers. There are succinct chapters on the technological aspects of the SDI and on Soviet developments of BMD, and a more polemical (but still useful) chapter on the arms control implications, which covers the relevant history. But about half the material is contributed by the editor himself, which largely accounts for the book's strengths and weaknesses. The weakness lies in his language (for example, "high-tech military shit") and his style, which are often more appropriate to a schoolboy's argument than a serious book. His writing seems to be informed by a conspiratorial view of the world which is strongly flavoured by a patronizing form of anti-Americanism, and he is too ready to resort to *ad hominem* attacks. The strength lies in the fact that Thompson is not embroiled in Western deterrence and reassurance theories and is therefore able to see the wider and more worrying implications of the SDI. Much of what Thompson says is perceptive. If he could moderate his style of presentation, he would reach a wider audience with his arguments.

Hawks, Doves, and Owls, edited by three members of the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard, focuses on the problems of avoiding nuclear war, and they only mention the SDI to warn against assuming that cities can be defended from nuclear attack. They, too, identify the opposing viewpoints that have been referred to here as deterrents and reassurers, or as nuclear weapon and arms control strategists. They caricature them as "hawks" and "doves", and suggest that there is need for a third pole, to be occupied by "owls". The hawks see the primary cause of war as weakness (Munich), the doves see it as provocation (Pearl Harbor), and the owls see it as loss of control (Sarajevo), and the trick is to balance these three perspectives. It is a wise discussion and it is hard to fault their "Agenda for Action", except for what they leave out. Over half the book is taken up with essays exploring the possible paths to nuclear war: accidental, surprise attack or pre-emption, escalation in Europe or the Middle East, and catalytic war. In all cases the different authors found it hard to paint a plausible scenario leading to war, but the editors warn of the risks when separate paths combine.

A quite different kind of book is *Star Warriors* by William Broad, science writer for the *New York Times*. This engrossing story is nominally about the group of very bright young scientists at the Livermore nuclear weapons "laboratory" (it has a staff of 8,000), who work on the design of weapons and other advanced projects, but Broad combines skillful reportage with a well-researched discussion of the issues underlying the SDI, the emphasis being on its technological aspects. When he embarked on the story he had no strong opinions on the policy implications, but he was prejudiced in favour of the project's technological feasibility because of his professional bias towards exciting areas of "hot new research". A major conclusion of his book is that none of the scientists he talked with at Livermore believed that the conception of a leak-proof defence was feasible. He comments that "anything that brings the Soviets to the negotiating table cannot be altogether bad... but using it as anything other than a bargaining chip seems pure folly". A week of sustained discussion at the Livermore Lab convinced him that "a move to defence would touch off an expensive new arms race that would make the world a more dangerous place in which to live. It would raise the risk of war."

Broad's comment reflects the widespread belief that the Soviets have to be pressured into negotiating on arms control, a belief that is profoundly mistaken. The restructuring of military objectives that followed the shift in Soviet doctrine on the nature of the war made it in their military interests to have some control, and since 1969 it has been Soviet policy to engage in arms control negotiations.

a way of reducing both the danger of nuclear war and the size of the US weapons inventory. The new wartime objective of avoiding the nuclear devastation of Russia favoured the smallest possible size of US arsenal. The shift from a policy of intercontinental nuclear pre-emption to one of launch-on-warning removed the requirement for superiority in offensive weapons. And the need for wartime deterrence favoured limits on ABM systems, while providing a low floor to the size of the Soviets' own arsenal of offensive systems; the deterrence of intercontinental escalation would either be achieved by the threat of devastating ten to twenty US cities, or else not at all. The only upward pressure on the size of the Soviet inventory was the need to match the United States.

The evidence of this fundamental shift in Soviet policy is impressive. There was the 1969 volte-face on limiting ABM systems and the abandonment in 1970 of more than seventy partially completed ICBM silos. In the second half of the 1960s the underlying rate for deploying Soviet ICBMs was 336 a year; in the 1970s it was only 144 a year; neither programme ran its full course, both being cut short by the SALT process. In 1979 (following the signing of SALT II), the conversion of about 100 silos to take fourth-generation missiles was aborted. Nor was this a passing phase. At the very start of the Reagan administration the Soviets made it clear they were "eager to enter arms control talks... on almost any basis", and they have continued to demonstrate their interest in even-handed negotiations. The Soviets see arms control negotiations and agreements as an ongoing process which is desirable in its own right. The SDI would disrupt that process.

There are many reasons why this relatively benign behaviour is largely unrecognized in the West, several of which can be laid at the Soviets' own door. But the problem goes deeper than common misperceptions and involves a large measure of deliberate obfuscation and unwitting self-deception on the part of the West. The obfuscation comes when seeking funds for new weapon programmes; Congress is more easily persuaded if the Soviets are portrayed as being unwilling to negotiate except under duress. But beyond that lies a receptivity to such portrayal that has been induced by "deterrence dogma", the body of theory and attitudes that grew up around nuclear weapons in the 1950s and 1960s. Other long-established ideas were progressively crowded out by this dogma, which became at times a virtual substitute for foreign and defence policy. Five aspects of the dogma are particularly relevant to this discussion.

One: emphasis was shifted from the traditional approach of avoiding war to the novel idea of preventing it by the threat of punishment with nuclear strikes. Two: this kind of deterrence relied on the will to take such extreme action, requiring that the electorate should believe in a high level of threat; such a threat became increasingly plausible as Soviet missiles came to be targeted on the United States. Three: deterrence presupposes the opponent's urge to take the action being deterred; Soviet aggressiveness was therefore a given and enemy intentions were not subject to analysis. These three aspects of the dogma were mutually reinforcing and ensured that the issues at stake were presented in stark moral terms and the evidence arranged accordingly. Four: reassurance theory focused on the stability of the strategic balance and left it to the deterrents to decide the level at which the balance was struck. Five: emphasis on the danger of sudden attack, whether premeditated or pre-emptive, focused attention on measures to control crises rather than on ways of avoiding them, in the first place.

Deterrence dogma has dominated Western thinking about defence and foreign policy for more than thirty years and it is not surprising that, apart from E. P. Thompson, all the authors under review argue within that framework. To some extent Allison & Co avoid this constraint by introducing the Owls' perspective, in addition to the Hawks and Doves of deterrence dogma. It is not accidental that their policy recommendations remind one of traditional statecraft before the dogma took over. But they do not escape the framework entirely, as can be seen by their failure to

acknowledge that the SDI is *sui generis*, and by their concentration on the "intermediate" causes of war, deferring consideration of "deep" causes to some unspecified future. The other authors make no attempt to escape the framework, and when they address the general question of the desirability of the SDI, the criteria used are "Will it enhance deterrence?" or "Will it impair stability?" Even when the objective is defined as "avoiding nuclear destruction" (as by F. A. Long), this is seen primarily in terms of preserving or improving stability.

Two questions are missing from all these discussions. One is the basic one of "Do we need the SDI?" Assuming that a leak-proof defence were possible, and assuming that it would not be destabilizing, are the level and type of enmity that exist between Russia and America of a kind to make such a defence necessary? This addresses the "deep" causes of war and raises the question of Soviet intentions, and there are many reasons for replying in the negative. However, in the absence of any such assessment, the affirmative response wins by default. The other question is "What are the long term consequences of putting weapons in space?" There is little explicit discussion of this question and of the opportunity costs involved. It is, of course, likely that many who oppose the SDI do have deep concerns about opening up this Pandora's box. Convention, however, requires them to frame their argument in terms of reassurance theory, in the same way that those who favour US military superiority claim to be enhancing nuclear deterrence.

We failed to address these kinds of questions in the 1950s, allowing ourselves to be guided by the tenets of deterrence dogma, with consequences that are now well known. We finally managed to halt the spiralling arms race in the 1970s, ending up with over 20,000 warheads on each side. The concept of arms control was discredited in the process, opening the way for the panacea of space-based defence. But the parallel with today is inexact. In the 1950s, it was believed that the nuclear build-up was necessary to deter Soviet aggression. Today we possess those deterrent forces and some (not I) argue that they have kept the peace for all these years. If we need to enhance the credibility of that deterrent while preserving strategic stability, all we have to do is deploy terminal defences to protect the ICBM fields as already allowed by the ABM treaty. There is no need to move into space.

A more important distinction is that by the 1950s we had already gone over the waterfall that divided the nuclear from the non-nuclear military world. Having failed in 1945 to seize the fleeting opportunity to halt the production of atomic bombs, the failure to halt the

build-up of weapons was a lesser opportunity lost and one that could and still can be, at least in part, retrieved through arms control agreements. In the second half of the 1980s we are only now approaching the next great waterfall which divides earth-based weapons from space-based strike systems. We are well placed to prevent ourselves from going over this waterfall, should we so decide, but if we do go over it there is no going back. The opportunity lost for ever will be the co-operative development of space for peaceful purposes. Instead, we will have an arms race in space, and most likely a form of war.

"Star Wars" is of concern to the whole world and is not just an American domestic issue, nor one that is limited to the Western alliance. In the United States, the debate is fettered by the SDI having been made virtually a test of loyalty to the President. On the world scene, debate is hampered in other ways. There is the excuse that it is too early to reach conclusions on the merits of the SDI and that one must await firmer information. This is a serious mistake. The critical issues are not technological and budgetary, but political and strategic and we already know enough to make informed judgments. Furthermore, decisions have to be made soon, if we are to avoid another spiral of the arms race.

Many people hope that the SDI will not last beyond the Reagan administration. That may be justified for the vision of a leak-proof shield, but it is almost certainly misplaced for space-based weapons in general. Research into such problems goes back many years and there is now considerable momentum behind the SDI, which is being consolidated by the politically astute way that the \$30 billion of research and development funds are being distributed across America. The history of US weapons procurement gives no reason to suppose that this concept will fade away of its own accord, particularly since it combines the military appeal of the "high frontier" with the technological challenge of space. The problem is how to redirect the momentum into more constructive channels.

A much more serious problem is that the SDI is being promoted by the United States and many are reluctant to line up with the Soviets in opposing it. But a conclusion that the SDI is both unnecessary and undesirable is not a statement on the comparative merits of the two social systems; it is a judgment on the global implications of an American policy that is being pursued for largely domestic purposes. There is no reason to assume that US policy preferences in this area are "better" than the Soviets'. There is the uncomfortable fact that since the late 1960s, it is the Soviet state that has seen arms limitations as being in its

national interest, while the American people remain profoundly ambivalent about its usefulness. It is Western deterrence dogma that is dominated by the narrow metaphors of Munich and Pearl Harbor, whereas Soviet policy is informed by the more complex metaphor of Sarajevo, the "owlish" perspective that Allison & Co emphasize in their policy recommendations. The matter before us is not that of freedom versus oppression or good versus evil, but whether putting weapons in space is likely to increase the likelihood of global conflict. "My country, right or wrong" has led nations to unnecessary war; "my ally right or wrong" is no less a recipe for disaster.

The world at large needs to recognize that the SDI is unlikely to collapse under its own disabilities, but equally that there is nothing inevitable about placing weapons in space. British strategists and commentators like Freedman and Lee do a disservice by assuming that it is inevitable, for they ignore the glory of the American political system—its openness to argument. There is already significant domestic opposition to the SDI, particularly within the arms control community and more broadly among intellectuals and former government officials. But it is hard to mobilize effective grass-roots support behind that opposition as long as it can be portrayed as being anti-American and pro-Soviet. The only way to outflank that stratagem is for America's allies to do their homework and speak up forcefully and publicly on the issue, as friends of the United States as well as members of the world community.

It would, however, be unfortunate if such a counter-attack yielded nothing more than the victory of deterrence dogma over Reagan's iconoclasm and missed the opportunity to reassess the assumptions that have shaped Western policy since the second half of the 1940s. Allison & Co hint at this requirement in the last of their ten sets of policy "Dos and Don'ts" and point to the possibility of a significant change in the superpowers' political relationship. Surprisingly, Freedman virtually ignores the question. His articles are provocative and perceptive, he is not a slave to deterrence dogma, and he continually alludes to the importance of political factors; but he never follows the argument through and stays trapped within his framework. Like many arms control strategists, he is so preoccupied with the problem of containing the dangers inherent in the nuclear relationship that he never asks whether the political basis of that relationship is inevitable. Indeed, to contemplate such a question is almost to be guilty of wishful thinking. His most serious criticism of the SDI is not that it will extend the arms race into space but that "it has served as yet another distraction for those unwilling to face up to the real dilemmas that confront us".

Academic strategists are so intent on facing up to the nuclear dilemmas that beset us that they tend to forget that the danger of nuclear war stems mainly from the superpowers' conflictive relationship and only incidentally from the existence of nuclear weapons. They tend to accept the confrontational nature of this relationship as inevitable and rarely consider approaching the problem from that direction. Their focus on crisis stability has fostered a technical and theoretical approach to problems that are fundamentally political. They are even-handed in recognizing the underlying conflicts of national interest but see no connection between the high level of hostility and the assumptions of Western deterrence dogma and the attitudes that derive from them.

We know that waging war is too serious to be left to generals and it now seems that avoiding war is too serious to be left to the academics. The problems we face are primarily political and so must be our solutions, and we can no longer shelter under the sophistries of deterrence dogma. The West may be able to hold its head high within the world community on matters such as human rights, but we should recognize that when it comes to the danger of world war the enemy is largely ourselves.

Other recent books on related subjects, including E.S. Williams's *The Soviet Military*, Lord Zuckerman's *Star Wars in a Nuclear World* and Michael Charlton's *The Star Wars History* will be reviewed in a future issue of the TLS.

POETRY REVIEW



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Poetry Review

Edited by Peter Forbes

The Booker Prize 100 years on

Anthony Thwaite

It seems to have become customary for Booker Prize chairpersons to make general remarks about The Novel. I don't intend to do so. We all know what a novel is. True, my fellow-judges and I have spent an intensive five months exploring the thing; and perhaps what we've found out is that it is an extraordinarily resilient as well as various form. It can be something Homer (whoever he or she was) would be able to recognize in 1986, and, again, something which might even have surprised James Joyce. It can be as apparently straightforward as *David Copperfield*, and as apparently devious as *Tristram Shandy*. In judging the novels this year, we haven't tried to achieve "balance", or looked deliberately for "novelty" or for "tradition". We've tried to avoid any sense of playing the market - whatever the market may be.

What I think we've all emerged with, after our hours and days and months of reading and re-reading, is a strong feeling that there are very many novels being written today, in English, within the terms of reference of the Booker Prize, which can stand comparison with all but the best novels of the past 200 or so years. We are *not* living in a dead period of fiction, for all the rubbish that's published, including some submitted for the Booker, and indeed for all the rubbish that sells. In the house of fiction there are many mansions, and most of them are inhabited.

I want now to indulge in an act of whimsy which isn't just whimsy. I ask you to cast your minds back to the Booker Prize presentation, 1886 - an occasion remembered by surprisingly few people. But for those who do remember, they will recall that the chairman of the judges was Mr Edmund Gosse. His fellow judges were Mr Austin Dobson, Mr Andrew Lang, Professor J. E. Thorold Rogers (representing both economics and the man in the street), and Mrs Gladstone.

They were faced with a formidable task. A lot of novels were published in 1886 - though not nearly as many as in 1986. The judges had, by the end of September, arrived at a shortlist. In their private conclaves, some of them had pressed hard for an especial favourite: Mrs Frances Hodgson Burnett's *Little Lord Fauntleroy*. Mrs Gladstone had made particular protestations for this. But it was finally felt that it had to be considered as a book primarily suitable for children, and therefore - perhaps - not quite eligible; though Mrs Gladstone continued to say that Mrs Burnett's book had done more than anything else in the history of literature to strengthen the bond between Britain and the United States of America.

Some apparent candidates excluded themselves quite quickly, through being indelible through nationality. For example, there was a novel by Mr Henry James, called *The Bostonians*: well written, civilized, it was judged to be of merit by Mr Gosse and Mr Dobson - but it turned out that Mr James was an American citizen, and therefore disqualified.

But these exclusions still left six strong contenders. There was Miss Marie Corelli's *A Romance of Two Worlds*, which made up in sentiment what it perhaps lacked in finesse and high seriousness. There were two novels by the young Mr George Gissing - infinitely depressing, but truly serious. A more popular contender was Mr Rider Haggard: his *King Solomon's Mines* followed the frequent Booker Prize penchant for fictions set in exotic places. And finally there was a duel between what emerged as the favourites: Mr Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, and Mr Thomas Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. Mr Stevenson had the edge when it came to Youth (a criterion about which several of the judges were concerned); Mr Hardy, on the other hand, had both the High Seriousness and the Rural vote.

There are gaps in the record here, I'm sorry to say. No one seems to remember who won. The main thing, it seems, was the shortlist; and it's true to say that at any rate half the books on that 1886 shortlist remain with us. I hope it will be true that the 1986 shortlist will still remain in the year 2086, to be read and enjoyed.

And that, I think, is the point, or part of the point. We were asked by the Booker Prize Management Committee to pick novels which we considered would still be read in twenty years' time. My whimsy about 1886 puts the problem even more sharply into perspective. How can we presume, now, to choose six novels - indeed, a winning novel too - which will be read and enjoyed twenty years from now, let alone a century from now? The present-day critic, or judge, or reader, isn't always wrong, it's true. His contemporaries knew that Dickens was great, and he still is. You just can't predict. What we do know is that we've settled on six novels which we believe in, which we hope and trust will still be read in twenty years' time, and which - if there is still a world for such things - have a strong chance of being read in a hundred years' time.

This is an abbreviated version of the main speech by the Chairman of the Booker Prize Judges, given after the award ceremony on October 22.

AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

Peter Calvocoressi worked for RAF Intelligence from 1940 to 1945. His books include *The British Experience 1945-75*, 1978, and *Top Secret Ultra*, 1980.

Alan Charlis is Chief Curator of Fossil Amphibians, Reptiles and Birds at the British Museum. He is the author of *Before the Ark*, 1975, and *A New Look at the Dinosaurs*, 1979.

David Coward is Lecturer in French at the University of Leeds. His translation of *La Dame aux camélias* in the World's Classics series will be published shortly.

Jim Craze's book of stories, *Continents*, has recently been published.

D. J. Enright's *The Alluring Problem: An essay on irony* was reviewed in the TLS of October 17.

Gavin Ewart's latest collection of poems, *The Complete Life Ones*, has just been published.

Peter Francis is Professor of French at the University of Edinburgh, and author of *Diderot*, 1984, in the Past Masters series.

Peter Lomas is the author of *The Case for a Personal Psychotherapy*, 1981.

Lachlan Mackinnon's poems appeared in *New Chatter Poets*, which was published recently. His study *Shakespeare the Aesthete* will be published next year.

Michael McGwire is Senior Fellow in Foreign Policy Studies at the Brookings Institution, Washington. His *Military Objectives in Soviet Foreign Policy* will be published shortly.

Robin Milner-Gulland is Reader in Russian Studies at the University of Sussex. He is the co-editor of *Russian Writing Today*, 1977.

Wm Roger Louis is Kerr Professor at the University of Texas and a Fellow of St Antony's College, Oxford. He is the author of *The British Empire in the Middle East*, 1984, which was recently reissued in paperback.

Wilfrid Mellers's books include *Bach and the Dance of God*, 1980, and *Beethoven and the Voice of God*, 1983. His *Angels of the Night: Popular female singers of our time* will be reviewed in a forthcoming issue of the TLS.

Blake Morrison is Deputy Literary Editor of the Observer. His collection of poems, *Dark Glasses*, was published in 1984.

Julian Murby is co-author of *Excavations at Portchester Castle IV*, 1985.

Anthony Pagden is the author of *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the origins of comparative ethnology*, 1982.

A. W. Raitt is Reader in French Literature at Magdalen College, Oxford. He is the author of *The Life of Villiers de l'Isle-Adam*, 1981.

R. S. Short is co-author of *Hans Belmer*, which was published earlier this year.

Alexander Walker is film critic of the *London Standard*. His *National Heroes: The British cinema in the seventies and eighties* was published.

Dame Mary Warnock is Mistress of Girton College, Cambridge. Her books include *Imagination*, 1976, *Schools of Thought*, 1977, and *Education: A way forward*, 1979.

Hugo Williams's most recent collection of poems, *Writing Home*, was published last year.

Michael Wishart has had ten one-man exhibitions in London. The first volume of his autobiography, *High Diver*, was published in 1977.

David Watkin is Gregory Professor of Music, University College of Wales at Aberystwyth. He is the author of *Septem Disciplina Vocum*, 1983, and *Tudor Music*, 1984.

The periodicals: Ariel

Allan Mackie

Ariel: A review of international English literature
\$12 per year. Dept of English, University of Calgary, 2500 University Drive NW, Calgary, Alberta T2N 1N4, Canada.

Given that the dispersal of English across the planet was a by-product of imperialism, it is inevitable that its situation in post-colonial nations should be a political question. The October 1984 number of *Ariel* was devoted to "Issues of Language", and despite the editorial's menacing references to Derrida, Lacan, Irigaray and Cixous, the best pieces dealt with the lived experience of an ex-colonial language in a frankly untheoretical way. Emeke Okeke-Ozigbo described, in "The Strangling Hold of Zurrjir", how English continues to imperil the emergence of an autochthonous Nigerian culture, while Jan B. Gordon's "English Poetry in Polylingual Singapore" gave a vivid account of that nation's political struggle over the languages its citizens speak, which brought home how serious an issue the persistence of English is. The first of these pieces could have been edited more severely, as, when they appear, could the book reviews, in which too few contributors are allowed too much self-expression in dealing with what must necessarily seem an arbitrary selection of topics.

The special issues of *Ariel* serve to limit its capacious potential. That of April 1985 dealt with South African literature over a wide range: of particular current interest was Gerald Moore's "The Maritan Descends: The poetry of Breyten Breytenbach", which by dealing with translations of this Afrikaans writer's work showed how interesting a poet he is, while at the same time offering an account of

his life which was less than flattering and salutary, reminding readers that poets may not make the best activists. In October 1985 the special subject was New Zealand and, although the pieces ranged from Terry Sturm's "Towards a History of Transstanman Literary Relations" to C. K. Stead on Ken Hulme, the impression given was incestuous and provincial. Too often the authors cited one another, and if this gave a true picture of the ill health of New Zealand's cultural life it was a brave one to present.

The New Zealand number was striking also in the division between the creative and the critical. *Ariel* publishes poetry as well as criticism, and in the January 1986 number, which is eclectic, Jayanta Mahapatra's "Afternoon" sticks in the mind with its observation that "Water, / which has never left us, covers / whatever is here, in its lonely well / that pulls down all our skies". Otherwise, this issue is remarkably disunited. Philip Redpath offers a dutiful account of the structure of *Darkness Visible*, Daniel Salem on "The Impact of Pinter's Work" seems concerned largely to explain the psychological inadequacies of those who don't like Pinter, and Samuel Beckett's *Break* is analysed by William Hutchings so as to give a good description of the playlet's shape; but he offers parallels with *Measure for Measure* which seem unjustified. Again, it is the articles treating linguistic tension - Chris Tiffin on Anglo-Australian fiction, Margaret Lenta's feminist view of Olive Schreiner and Elsa Joubert, and Tanure Ojaide's discussion of Dennis Brutus's persona as troubadour - which are most rewarding. Despite its aims, this rather loosely edited journal's achievement is to introduce us to conflicts easily overlooked, to remind us that "international English literature" is a historical accident and not a collective creation.

AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 301
Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than November 21. A prize of £20 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or falling that the most nearly correct - in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Entries, marked "Author, Author 301" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on November 29.

1 My aunt was a tall, hard-featured lady, but by no means ill-looking. There was an inflexibility in her face, in her voice, in her gait and carriage, amply sufficient to account for the effect she had made upon a gentle creature like my mother; but her features were rather handsome than otherwise, though unbending and austere. I particularly noticed that she had a very quick, bright eye.

2 It was, as I recognised with some difficulty from a photograph in the family album, my Aunt —, who had arrived late, dressed rather as the late Queen Mary of beloved memory might have dressed if she had still been with us and had adapted herself a little bit towards the present mode. I was surprised by her brilliant red hair, monumentally piled, and her two big front teeth which gave her a vital Neanderthal air.

3 My aunt, who looked rather like the well-known bust of Julius Caesar except that she had a lot of white hair and wore on top of it a hat in the fashion of 1911, used to march about among her guests in a military manner, carrying a mace parasol which she did not open but used to emphasise points she was making in the interests of cats.

Competition No 297
Whence: Bill Manhire
Answers:

1 The change of Philomel, by the barbarous king
So rudely forced, yet still there the nightingale
Filled all the desert with (unpleasant) voices
T. S. Eliot, "He Do the Police in Different Voices", an early version of *The Waste Land* as annotated by Ezra Pound.

2 Your hair is white
My hair is white
Come let us talk of love
What other theme do we know
When we were young
We were in love with one another
And therefore ignorant
W.B. Yeats, "Subject", the first draft of "After Long Silence"

3 To-day the deliberate increase in the chances of death;
The conscious acceptance of guilt in the necessary murder;
To-day the expending of powers
On the flat ephemeral pamphlet and the boring meeting.
W. H. Auden, first published version (1937) of "Spain".

The third in a series of lectures on Aspects of Book Collecting sponsored by Bloomsbury Book Auctions will be held in the company's sale rooms on November 6 at 6.15 pm. John Murray will lecture on "The Eccentricities of Authors". Tickets are £2.50 each and are available from Bloomsbury Book Auctions, 3 & 4 Hardwick Street, London EC1R 4RY.

There will be an open poetry reading for Remembrance Day on Tuesday November 11 at St James's, Piccadilly from 11 am to 11 pm. Among those taking part are Monsignor Bruce Kent, Kit Wright, Alan Brownjohn and Gavin Ewart. Further information is available from Poems on the Underground, 124 Mansfield Road, London NW3 2JB.

Letters

Pogroms in Poland and the Ukraine

Sir, - I read with great interest Bernard Wasserstein's review of books on Israel (including Conor Cruise O'Brien's *The Siege*) in the TLS of October 10. While I was in general agreement with his conclusions, I found one statement misleading. Professor Wasserstein refers to "the pogroms in Poland and the Ukraine after the First World War, during which at least 75,000 [Jews] were killed", thereby lumping together what was occurring in Poland and the Ukraine. In fact, the scale of anti-Jewish violence in the two areas was quite different. Wasserstein is correct to the extent that many tens of thousands of Jews perished in the Ukraine at this time. But in Poland the number of Jewish victims was probably between 250 and 400 - the worst episodes being the pogrom which followed the Polish liberation of Lwow in November 1918 and the massacre of some forty Jews in Pinsk in April 1919. These incidents are shameful and deplorable; they cannot, however, be put on a par with the slaughter that took place in the Ukraine.

ANTONY POLONSKY,
Institute of Polish-Jewish Studies, 45 St Giles, Oxford.

Schmitt and Habermas

Sir, - Jürgen Habermas's long review (September 26) of Carl Schmitt's *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy and Political Theory* has only just come to my attention. Habermas's review is as interesting for what it does not say as for what it does. When he writes of *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy* that "the substance of the argument of the first two chapters and the preface to the second edition of 1926 can be absorbed even independently of the historical context and used for systematic reflections" about democracy, I wonder how many English readers will know that this is exactly what Habermas has done? Towards the end of my introduction to *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, I pointed out that such contemporary political theory in Germany builds on the elements of a contradiction between liberal, parliamentary legislation and the democratic will of the people. That might not surprise your readers, but Habermas's own debt to Schmitt on this point probably would. Habermas's essay on political participation which prefaces his *Student and Politics* (1958) and his study of public opinion and the public sphere, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* (1961), both advance a "substantialist" conception of democracy which is taken from Carl Schmitt's legal thought as against the "empiricist" and "institutionalist" assumptions that informed Richard Thoma's theory of democratic government.

Habermas's critique of liberal democratic institutions in these two early works and in *Legitimation Crisis* (1976) would be impossible, moreover, without the distinction of a "constitution" from its "reality" and the analytic emphasis given to this tension in the modern State which Schmitt's distinction of "legality" and "legitimacy" developed. All these connections between Schmitt and Habermas have been traced in my article, "Carl Schmitt and the Frankfurt School" (forthcoming in *Telos*, December 1986), and were the focus of a debate between us two years ago.

In view of this, Habermas's remarks on the dangers of Schmitt's democratic theory for the Left in Italy and Germany cannot be anything but misleading, as Paul Hirst pointed out (Letters, October 10). And in the light of Habermas's transmission of Schmitt's State theory to the English-speaking world via his own reception of it, his Cassandra tone at the conclusion of his review seems, at best, disingenuous. Or do the norms of "communicative competence" rely, like Fichte's educational dictator, on a censor?

ELLEN KENNEDY,
Department of Politics, University of York, York.

Golding's Sources
Sir, - In my contribution to *William Golding: The man and his books*, I tentatively advanced various sources for Golding's novels and examined their differing degrees of plausibility. I concluded: "For myself, I believe that the real sources for Golding's novels are not Dostoevsky, Huxley, Henry James or Kipling. They are the books themselves, despite their manifest heterogeneity." I should have thought that was clear enough.

But Peter Reading (October 17) finds it "particularly amusing" that I should propose Southwell's "The Burning Babe" as a source. My argument is that this poem, like the other "sources" raised and rejected, is not a source at all. Reading uses against me the very point I was at pains to make.

Even had I staked everything on the Southwell poem, his argument is a logical shambles. First, John Carey shrewdly notes a recurrence of children and fire in *Lord of the Flies* and *Darkness Visible*. Second, Golding admits he has never noticed the recurrence. Third, I raise (only to reject) "The Burning Babe" as a source for the opening of *Darkness Visible*. Where is the connection between the first two points and the third? Logically, it is possible that Golding based the opening of *Darkness Visible* on Southwell, but did not notice the repetition. Reading might just as well say that Carey has noticed a preference in Golding for red shirts, that Golding has said this preference is not conscious - and that this proves cotton is not used in the manufacture of shirts.

Either Peter Reading is a fool, which I doubt, or he has been made to look one by inept editorial intervention. Which is it?

CRAIG RAINE,
13 Alma Place, Oxford.

'Il mio paese'

Sir, - In his review of Dino Grandi's *Il mio paese* (October 3) Adrian Lyttelton refers to "Grandi . . . in the unFascist atmosphere of Montecitorio, Geneva or the Farnesina". Probably by Farnesina Lyttelton means the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, which, at the time, was Palazzo Chigi, not Farnesina (and a short while before, Palazzo della Consulta). P. F. MIGNONE,
14 Villiers Road, Rathgar, Dublin 6.

Factoids

Sir, - I very much enjoyed Eric Korn's review of David Smith's biography of H. G. Wells (October 17), but I have the temerity to suggest that he has produced a "factoid" of his own. "Coacervate" (see his third paragraph) is a transitive verb: someone is heaping up those letters.

GEORGE HEYGOATE,
Willow Grange, Wissett, Halesworth, Suffolk.

Rowland L. Collins, who died last year, has bequeathed a collection of first and early editions of books and other materials by Alfred, Lord Tennyson to the University of Rochester, NY. There are about 500 printed books and 150 letters and manuscripts in the bequest. Items include the rare, anonymous *Poems, by Two Brothers* (1827), by Alfred and his brother Charles, as well as the poet's first solo volume, *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical* (1830), both first editions.

'Earls of Creation'

Sir, - As author of *Earls of Creation* I endorse the criticisms David Hall (Letters, October 17) makes of the recent paperback reprint, briefly reviewed in your issue of August 15. Furthermore I can add to them.

Since my book was originally published by Hamish Hamilton in 1962 several corrections have been brought to my notice. I gave all these to the paperback publishers who agreed to incorporate them. But more than half were either wholly ignored or so altered as to make confusion worse confounded. Not only did the publishers exclude all the illustrations in the hardback but, without consulting me, put on the outside cover the print of a building a hundred years earlier in date than those described in the text. Nor could they even get the title of the book right, adding the definite article - a minor fault admittedly, but a fault. Had I been shown a specimen proof of what appeared these mistakes, including the wrong pagination numbers of the index, of which Mr Hall justly complains, could have been rectified. I am advised that in the case of paperback reproductions this privilege is not conceded to an author. He, poor brute, has no redress, and can only gnash his teeth in fury or shut up. Until David Hall's timely letter appeared in your columns I did the latter. Am I unique in thus feeling aggrieved?

JAMES LEES-MILNE,
Essex House, Badminton, Gloucestershire.

Inverted Doppelgänger

Sir, - There are exceptions to every rule, and not every host to a *Doppelgänger* conforms to the pattern described by Robert Alter in his interesting survey (October 24) - make, in the professions, an almost friendless bachelor.

In Charles Williams's powerful version of the story, *Descent into Hell* (1937), the *Doppelgänger*'s host is as dissimilar to this description as can well be. She is a young woman without means, living with her grandmother. Moreover the outcome of the story is equally unlike the gloom of the usual ending: Pauline's *Doppelgänger*, of whom she has been afraid all her life, enables her at the crisis to bring comfort to an ancestor about to suffer a martyr's death at Smithfield.

Perhaps Mr Alter will extend his review to cover similar inversions of the Dr Jekyll fantasy.

J. K. HORSEFIELD,
40 Clatterford Road, Carisbrooke, Newport, Isle of Wight.

Aspects of Copyright

Sir, - David Holbrook's letter (October 10) somewhat misrepresents the copyright law as it is conventionally understood by publishers and authors' agents. The provisions Mr Holbrook refers to come under what is called "fair dealing" and apply only for purposes of criticism or review. The current guide to fair dealing issued by the Publishers Association in 1971 (a review of which is overdue) suggests that the maximum use which can be claimed as fair dealing is, for prose, a single extract of 400 words, or a series of extracts none of which is more than 300 words up to a total of 800 words. For poetry forty lines is the maximum or 25 percent of the whole poem (whichever is the less).

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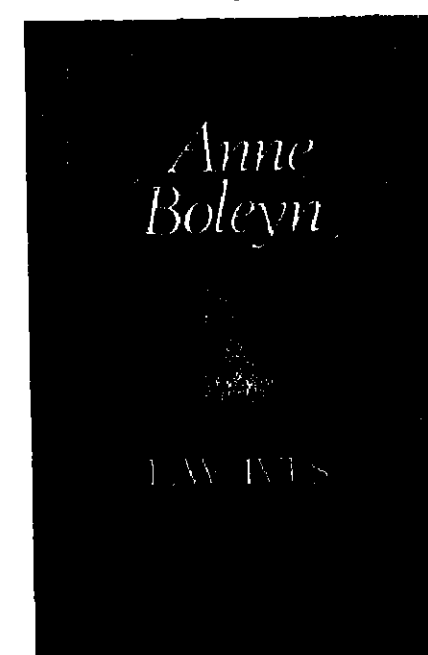
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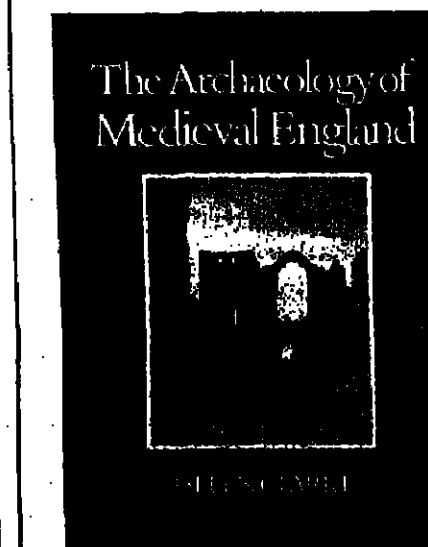


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COMMENTARY

Silk v serge

David Nokes

FAY WELDON
The Life and Loves of a She-Devil
BBC2

Generalizations about the kinds of novels that will or won't work on the small screen are nearly always wrong. Television, the most protean of media, devours its own conventions like Saturn's children. Magical realism might almost be a pidgin-synonym for television, and it's easy to understand the visual appeal of Fay Weldon's characteristic blend of lurid supernaturalism and feminist revenge. Her fiction brings together in conveniently two-dimensional forms two of television's favourite styles, coupling the fantasy of *Dr Who* with the urban myths of *Brookside*. Why then does *The Life and Loves of a She-Devil* fail so badly?

The problem is one of tone. Fay Weldon's fiction walks a line between satire and mawkishness, and her parodies of pulp fiction indulge the very stereotypes which they subvert. Here she takes a Freudian blow-torch to fairyland in the cause of ugly sisters and wicked stepmothers everywhere. Her Cinderella, Mary Fisher, played by Patricia Hodge, is a yuppie bitch; her heroine, the She-devil Ruth (Julie Wallace), is a problem page transformed into the Queen of the Night. The difficulty in maintaining this blend of domestic satire and witchcraft fable is most obvious in the language. As stereotypes, the characters converse entirely in clichés. Dennis Waterman, as the erring husband Bobbo, has evidently attended the same dire elocution classes as David Threlfall in John Mortimer's *Paradise Postponed*; he launches himself on each fresh banality with the conversational fluency of a linguaphone record. Yet even he seems to gag at addressing his mistress like a shareholder's meeting: "At

this moment in time I need your support." As a man, of course, Bobbo has no character anyway, serving merely as a sexual shuttlecock between the princess in her tower and Hecate in her den. "Not a great beauty, but a good soul", is how he first describes his hulking wife to Mary Fisher. Beneath the condescending cliché lurks a Mephistophelean clue, for Ruth will sell her soul to become a Mary Fisher clone. But the dialogue nose-dives under the symbolic lumber it is made to bear. Visual signposts take every scene and image to the verge of self-parody, as when we cut off from Bobbo between adulterous sheets with Mary to Ruth in helmet and vizor, slicing through a phallic tree-trunk with a chain-saw.

This is a style in which costumes speak louder than words. The real drama is in the contrast of silk and serge, the clash between French knickers and Dralton slacks. And this, of course, is the point. When one character bleats sympathetically to Ruth that "appearances don't matter" she retorts angrily, "Oh yes they do!" The trouble with Ruth, Bobbo explains, is that she thinks in clichés. "I suppose Mary Fisher doesn't?" she replies. "Of course not. She's a creative writer." Naturally this is ironic, but at whose expense? In the novel, when Bobbo tells Mary to stop turning out trash and be a serious writer she retorts, "I am a serious writer." But in the television version, Ted Whitehead has made her proud of her trash. "I'm never going to write *Anna Karenina* or *Madame Bovary*", she trills, in tones which send Tolstoy and Flaubert to the bottom with Bobbo.

Television replaces the sardonic antiphonal narrative of the novel with a travelogue of images alternately seductive and grotesque. Neatly packaged, with an eerie signature tune and colour magazine locations, the serial turns the translucency of irony into a version of the lip-gloss wars of *Dynasty* and *Lace*.

Above the falls

Anthony Pagden

The Mission
Various cinemas

Over the edge of the Iguaçu Falls in what is now Paraguay, a Jesuit strapped to a makeshift wooden cross drops, head upright, to his death. "They came", reflects the Papal legate, Cardinal Altamirano (brilliantly portrayed by Ray McAnally) "and were rewarded with martyrdom." But the death of one priest brings another, Brother Gabriel (Jeremy Irons), who climbs barefoot up the sheer rock-face over which his companion has so recently fallen. It is the beginning of his mission. What he will create "above the falls" is what the Jesuits called a "reduction", an economically self-sufficient community where the Indians could find refuge from the slave-traders and the depredations of the colonists.

These Jesuit communities have for long been a source of fascination, portrayed by some, Voltaire among them, as an exercise in the hypocritical exploitation of the innocent savage, and by others, including the order itself, as an experiment in a Christian, utopian justice. The missions may, as one of the brothers tells Altamirano, have been made in the image of the primitive apostolic Church. But they were also economically very successful and, because of this and because of their political independence, they aroused the suspicion, and the cupidity, of the Spanish and Portuguese crowns which, in 1750, agreed to secularize their territories. *The Mission*, which begins with a single death and ends with a massacre, is the story of the tragic attempt by the Indians and the priests on one "reduction" to resist. Brother Gabriel is joined "above the falls" — a phrase which echoes and re-echoes throughout the film — by Rodrigo Mendoza (Robert De Niro), a repentant slave-trader who joins the order after killing his brother in a duel. Together they and the Indians build the Mission of Saint Ignatius. When the order finally comes to abandon what they have created and to send the Indians back to be prey once again

to the slavers, they decide to fight. Mendoza buckles on his sword. Gabriel prepares for martyrdom.

Towering over the whole venture are the massively spectacular Falls. It is they which divide one world from another. Above, lies what Altamirano, worldly, politic, ironical, refers to as "the Garden of Eden", below the corrupt and infinitely corrupting presence of the European colonists. Up the Falls climb first Gabriel, then Mendoza, hauling behind him in symbolic penance a net filled with all the lumber, sword, armour and guns, of his former life. Finally come the Portuguese soldiery, complete with canoes and cannon, in one magnificent scene, clinging to the rock face. Roland Joffé has extracted the very best from his cast. Conversion is as difficult to portray as it is to explain, but De Niro is convincing, always keeping the old Mendoza, his violence now directed towards other ends, just visible beneath the surface. It is a portrait of man who has found not so much God, as a just cause. Irons, though he sometimes looks and sounds more like an English country parson than an eighteenth-century Jesuit, powerfully conveys the dilemma of one sworn to obey a command which he knows to be morally wrong. But the finest and most moving performances of all come from the Waunana peoples themselves, their faces displaying an almost bewildering range of emotions from the humane laughter with which they greet the sight of the exhausted, tear-stained Mendoza and his net full of rusty weapons, to the terror in the eyes of the children as they march slowly out to face the Portuguese cannon.

Roland Joffé's vision of the Jesuit missions is excessively idealistic, and his history is only approximate, but he has made a powerful and compelling film with all the technical brilliance, and much of the same urgency, which marked *The Killing Fields*. Few could fail to be moved by it, and no one, however little he or she may know about the plight of the Amerindians then and now, could fail to sense the force in Altamirano's doubt that the Indians may have preferred "that the sea and the wind had not brought any of us to them".

Just doing their jobs

Peter Calvocoressi

HUGH WHITEMORE
Breaking the Code
Haymarket Theatre

Alan Turing was a homosexual mathematician of genius whose work in pure mathematics was applied during the Second World War to winning it. Each of these strands in his life — his work and his nature — has its drama and the two between them create more drama when he is prosecuted in 1952 under pre-Wolfenden law and it then emerges that his homosexuality debars him from any further service to the nation. His suicide two years later is yet another drama. Hugh Whitmore's play, based on the excellent biography of Turing by Andrew Hodges, which was published in 1983, fuses all these elements into a work which is at once low-key and yet tense. Alan Turing (Derek Jacobi) is on stage almost throughout while the other eight characters come and go in a series of scenes, numerous, short and out of chronological order. Voices are seldom raised and there are rarely more than two characters on stage together. This patchworking works remarkably smoothly. Derek Jacobi — whose performance is impressive — has the difficult task of reacting to all the other characters in turn while presenting Turing as a man who is, socially and emotionally, far more detached than attached. His Turing, vividly reincarnated, is friendly, mildly eccentric, more than mildly naïve, basically natural and normal in spite of his outside brain and his outsider sexual tastes. Not that these abnormalities are hidden away. Both the genius and the homosexuality are unfussily open and the audience is never allowed to forget them, even if Turing himself does so for much of the time. Not the least of Hugh Whitmore's skills is the ability to put over complicated mathematical ideas clearly and wittily. (If you ever have difficulty with Hilbert's *Entscheidungsproblem*, see this play.) As for the sex, it is unaccented but undisguised, and is purveyed in two deft performances by Ron (Paul Slack), an unemployed petty criminal who falls for a little sex in return for a good meal and the chance to pinch a few pounds; and Nikos of Ipsos (Dean Winters), a

Corfu beach-boy who speaks only Greek and so is intelligible neither to Turing nor the audience.

There are no baddies in the play; the villain, if any, is the *Zeigeist*. The policeman (Dave Hill) and the security men (Michael Malnick) are just doing their jobs. The policeman, called in by Turing himself to investigate a minor burglary, learns incidentally of Turing's affair with Ron, wishes he had not been told but refuses to overlook what he knows. The security man, aptly named John Smith, esteems Turing but spies on him all the same, more resigned than alarmed or indignant. Mrs Turing (Isabel Dean) is a supremely conventional upper-middle-class mother who momentarily loses her self-control when her son tells her that he is homosexual and is about to be publicly tried, but immediately recovers to ask what she can do to help. They are all likeable people, if smaller than life. So too is the girl Ru (Joanna David) to whom Turing is briefly engaged during the war but who later settles for a husband and two children and realizes she must be happy since she does not ask herself the is.

But the key character, and most telling performance, after Jacobi's Turing, is Michael Gough's as Dillwyn Knox, Turing's colleague in cryptanalysis at Bletchley Park. In two splendid scenes these two discuss two sets of problems: first, the German Enigma machine which baffles Knox but to which Turing — who has pondered the possibility of building a machine which will function like a brain but without a body attached — has the key; and secondly, Turing's homosexuality, which Turing regards as his own business while Knox argues that no man may ignore the effect of even his private ways on other people. The play ends with two short, contrasted scenes. Mrs Turing steps in to collect from the police her dead son's few material possessions: Alan Turing, solitary, bites the poisoned apple that ends his life. The implication is that he is putting to the test his theory that a brain may function without being annexed to a body. This finale works strikingly in the theatre, although second thoughts question whether Turing could believe that his own brain could survive his own body — in which case his last experiment is vain, and this Enigma is eternal.

A view of Provence

Jonathon Brown

Sholto Johnstone Douglas
Cyril Gerber Fine Art, Glasgow, until
November 8

Sholto Johnstone Douglas is probably best known for his work in the collection of the Imperial War Museum, which holds over fifty paintings. Johnstone Douglas served as a War Artist during the First World War, when he was in his mid-forties and had established himself as a society portrait painter. He returned to that career at the end of the war, but in 1926, for reasons that are left untold, he left London with his wife and young family, and moved to the south of France, where he lived until the start of the Second World War. During this period he produced his most contented work, and it is these years that are best represented in this show. His muted view of Provence is sometimes reminiscent of the impressive and variable landscape of Dumfriesshire, his family home. (His father was laird of Lockerbie.) He did not return to France after the war, but lived in England and Scotland until his death, twenty years later. Before studying with Philip Wilson Stear and Henry Tonks at the Slade, he had studied in Paris and Antwerp.

Johnstone Douglas's ability to sketch quickly and tellingly is apparent. Some of his best work, however, expresses a sombre and almost impenetrably mysterious mood, the oil thickly applied, in a way that is reminiscent of Rembrandt, and some evinces a breezy, sunny quality that is usually cool and limpid. His handling of shade is beautiful, some of the Provencal

scenes offering the inspirational brushwork of Cézanne's watercolours, with their exaltation of tone and temperature. A pair of large oils lent by the Countess of Craven, and specially cleaned for this exhibition, one showing Millais's two sisters and the other a Mrs Harris, both show their subjects seated beside the sea on a bright but clearly not sweltering day. The sun pours down relentlessly from behind them, creating an evocative shade, and this sunlight and the salty, sharp air are expressed in a dazzlingly sure range of whites and off-whites. The sea behind Mrs Harris dances and sparkles, and we can appreciate her finely translucent complexion under the shade of her hat.

No doubt there are plenty of genre pieces in his output, but none the less on two occasions at the Royal Academy in the early years of the century, his entry, superficially conventional, caused a stir. The first concerned a vast picture of his seven sisters, here reproduced capitalizing in a small photograph, since the painting is almost larger than the gallery itself. The second concerned his portrait of the Hon. Sir Douglas Douglas-Scott and family of 1901, shown in a Dietrich motor car; this is claimed to be the first such painting to include the new-fangled machine. It is easy enough to look at the smaller works here and spot the influence of careful study of Degas, Whistler, Daumier, Sargent and so on, but this is to miss the point. What is worthwhile is that the evident pleasure and freshness of the man's talent could so effectively transform these derivations and produce lively and individual work. The talent cannot be underestimated, for the portrait of Mrs Harris is a masterpiece, even if it would be going too far to call Johnstone Douglas a master.

The Fitzreine rules O.K.

Michael Wishart

Nina Hammett and her circle
Michael Parkin Gallery, until November 12
DENISE HOOKER
Nina Hammett queen of bohemia
280pp, with 8 colour and 75 black-and-white illustrations. Constable. £15.
009 466970 8

Those who recall a lacklustre figure tottering from club to pub around Soho with an Oxo tin for begging-bowl, a spectre from some obscure mendicant order based in Old Montparnasse, are in for a big surprise.

Miss Nina Hammett has emerged from Limbo. Much of her finest work is to be seen at the Parkin Gallery, enlivened by a selection of paintings, drawings and watercolours by her friends.

Neither Miss Hammett nor many of her circle broke new ground; rather, their thorough training and quick intelligence led them to scatter their seed, assiduously, into the fresh ground being broken across the Channel. They reaped a plentiful harvest.

The crass provincial apathy of the England of Nina's youth is nicely revealed in Wilfred Scawen Blunt's description of the pioneering exhibition *Monet and the Post-Impressionists*, organized by Roger Fry in 1910.

Nothing but the gross puerility which scrawls indecencies on the walls of a privy. The drawing is on the level of an untaught child, the sense of colour that of a tea-tray painter, the method that of a schoolboy who wipes his fingers on a slate after spilling on them. They are the works of idleness and impotent stupidity, a pornographic show.

This babyish goulash was provoked by Cézanne, Van Gogh, Matisse, Picasso. No wonder Nina rebelled!

Ever curious about the variety of human kind, Nina preferred her portraits, and these are certainly the most substantial achievements displayed. She was a perspicacious and affectionate judge of character, and these paintings are at once of, and about her models. Then, a lovely "Landscape in Provence" (1926) reveals Nina's prowess as a subtle colourist in command of the inexhaustible potentialities of classical composition, worthy of a disciple of Cézanne. It is interesting that only in the double portrait, "Ethelbert and Elizabeth White" (c1918), where there is evidence of the "squaring-up" method advocated by Sickert, does Hammett's drawing fail her.

For, from childhood onward she drew admirably. Later, intimacy with Gaudier-Brzeska led to a more fluid, sculptural line, while friendship with Modigliani inspired a quality of graceful arabesque. It was in watercolour that Nina's skill first showed signs of failing. Compare the exquisite "Street Corner Conversation" (c1916) and "House amongst Trees, Collioure" (1920); with the banal "Twelve Pins, Galway" (1947). But drawing was Nina's first love and one which never deserted her. In 1954, two years before her death, she produced many studies of pretty boys which are among her most forcible and poetic works: Hammett is simply represented in this medium here. This is a laudable exhibition, of documentary as well as aesthetic interest. Surely, in one of the sleazier suburbs of the Celestial City, near the crumbling outer barricades upon which handsome angels are daubing "THE FITZREINE RULES O.K." in faded Omega Workshop hues, Nina is swigging fortified nectar in celebration of her triumph.

I am by no means certain that she is raising her glass to Miss Denise Hooker, whose *Nina Hammett queen of bohemia* was published last week. In *Laughing Torso*, the first of her two volumes of autobiography, Nina wrote: "I must say that I think that the fullest details can be told to a select company of sympathetic people, but not written down for everyone to read." Clearly, Miss Hooker concurs with Lytton Strachey: "Discretion is not the better part of biography." Nina's reservations notwithstanding, Miss Hooker has written a fascinating book. Learning, of course, on both her subjects' autobiographies, she has amplified them to advantage, clarifying what was left enigmatic, and assembling much new material from exhaustive research and conversation with Douglas a master.

Nina's friends. The result is almost too much of a good thing. The reader is dragged, breathless, in Miss Hammett's trail, from genteel childhood in Wales, through the Royal School for Daughters of Officers in the Army, where her high point was playing the Mad Hatter in *Alice in Wonderland* (a role she never entirely abandoned), various art schools, a visit to Russia where she drank Swedish punch and danced Mazurkas and was thrilled by the ballet, to Montparnasse (in 1914) where she slept around and met "everyone". A romantic snob, she drank on the homosexual peripheries of café society. Already, the bar stool was replacing the easel, the primrose path leading downhill, as Nina gathered the anecdotes which, later, she was to relate, *ad infinitum*, in exchange for drinks. Augustus John advised: "Keep on the water wagon; it will pay you like anything. Good for your work and your looks." This counsel was ignored, and the surprise element in this book is that, despite her reckless living, Nina produced some excellent paintings. The author's all-too-brief incursions into her subject's work are extremely astute,

and her illustrations comprehensive.

The latter part of the book is necessarily depressing. We are spared no detail of Nina's ghastly decline. Public vomiting, incontinence, beds covered with rats' droppings, crawling with lice and "rough trade". Bedridden with a fractured thigh, our heroine was visited by Lucian Freud, a loyal friend. Telling him that she had kept the tea warm for him, she lifted the bedcovers to reveal herself curled round the teapot for warmth. (I fear Zola would have appreciated this denouement.) In December 1956, Nina fell from her window and was impaled on railings below. She was in agony for three days, cried "why don't they let me die?" and, mercifully, vanished from this earth. The verdict was "accidental death", but many doubted it. The Torso had ceased to laugh for too long.

Denise Hooker tells her cautionary tale with humour and compassion. It will be useful to historians and an urgent warning to anyone who supposes that drunkenness and loveless promiscuity are anything but a lamentable waste of an artist's valuable time.



Nina Hammett's portrait of Osbert Sitwell, from the exhibition reviewed here.

A vision of the old new world

Wilfrid Mellers

HECTOR BERLIOZ
La Prise de Troie
Grand Theatre, Leeds

Compared with most composers, Berlioz was not only highly intelligent but also literately intellectual. Such was his innate temperament, nurtured by his French ancestry. At a time when the mainstream of music was German and instrumentally symphonic, he remained faithful to French musical traditions, which had always been allied to theatre. Even when he composed symphonies, he projected experience theatrically; the instruments spoke and conversed in pliant melos and expressive gesture. That he, none the less, thought musically is attested by the fact that he, almost alone among composers of his time, understood what Beethoven's late music was after. Both Berlioz and Beethoven were pure musicians who eschewed any doctrine of pure music because they had no doubt that music, being made by human beings, concerned human experience, manifest in social contexts.

By instinct and intention Berlioz was an operatic composer; if his theatrical ventures were usually frustrated, that too is what, in the circumstances prevailing in post-revolutionary France, they are about. The last and largest of his operas, never performed *in toto* during his lifetime, was a product of his long love for classically disciplined Virgil, which complemented his romantic passion for (reputedly undisciplined) Shakespeare; since Berlioz himself had both passion and discipline, he need fear no rivalry from these two supreme creators. Between 1854 and 1864 — for three years at white heat — he worked on his masterpiece, though he knew that, given the current state of French culture, he had scant hope of seeing it staged. The culmination of his artistic life, *Les Troyens* presents an ideal vision of a new heroic civilization: which is the old world, and the old techniques born anew. He offers no puerile revolutionary utopia, but real men and women, with human fears and frailties: members of a spiritual (no longer titular) aristocracy who love, hate, suffer and die, as people have always done, while encouraging us to believe that human life might once again attain the dignity of a heroic age.

Berlioz's score preserves the externalities of French classical opera in its pastoral interludes, heroic marches, monumental choruses and danced pantomimes. The relationship between Berlioz's aria and aria and those of Spontini and Rameau — and behind them Lully — is both intimate and subtle.

His imaginary civilization reinstates the irrational: which is why his other and greater musical hero; the daemonic Beethoven, is the catalyst whereby he was able to "dramatize through the orchestra", creating from potentially expressive melodic and rhythmic gestures a

coherently evolving symphonic whole.

It is to the point that *Les Troyens* is an ensemble-and-chorus opera since it concerns men in society. The basic polarity is between on the one hand the superb arioso and aria of Cassandra as irritable seer and prophetess, and on the other hand the uneasy, but rationally metrical militarism of the Trojan March. In between are the great ensemble numbers, such as the shattering octet and chorus that ends Act One after the revelation of treachery within the horse. In every respect Berlioz's genius is here both inimitable and truly recreative: melodic and rhythmic rather than harmonic in impulse and — as is no less rare among nineteenth-century composers — genuinely rapid in melodic-harmonic momentum, not merely in sheer rate of metrical progression.

The classical, universal theme of hope and treachery, betrayal and hope, was related by Berlioz to what had happened, during his lifetime, to the promise of Napoleonic glory. But the grandeur that was Greece and the glory that was Rome were still living memories, at least for those few who had ears to hear what Berlioz's music offered. Our own vision of a new world is both tarnished and bedraggled: which makes the new production of *La Prise de Troie* by English Opera North both off the mark and on it. Although for a small, impoverished provincial company to tackle Berlioz's epic opera might seem intrinsically foolhardy, one can only applaud the courage of the enterprise, and may even excuse its inadequacy on the grounds that the ingenious production (by Tim Albery) "relevantly" reduces Berlioz to something like our size. We are by now habituated, in grandiose productions of "political" operas, to obligatory references to twentieth-century bureaucracy and concentration camps. In this case they point an uncomfortable moral: being unworthy of Berlioz's vision, we cannot hope artistically to realize it.

In this production realization is most nearly achieved where one might most expect it: in the public choral and orchestral music, sung

and played, under David Lloyd-Jones, with zest, effervescence, pathos and incipient frenzy, if not always with the electrical precision Berlioz needs. The solo singing, on the other hand, was never more than workmanlike. Kristine Ciesinski, in the crucial role of Cassandra, looked splendid but sounded adequate; which is inadequate for a prophetess who calls for Callas-like charisma. Pauline Thulborn, Ronald Hamilton and David Hillman made frilly brave stabs at Hecuba, Aeneas and Sinon (whose striking scene, expunged by Berlioz, had been rescinded for this performance by Hugh Macdonald), while never suggesting that they might be capable of heroism reborn. The sets and lighting were likewise more appropriate to Leeds in the 1980s than to Berlioz's restored antiquity. Still, the magnificent music survived; we must be grateful for it, even in twentieth-century dehydration.

Unlike Wagner's archetypal universe, Berlioz's mediterranean city had a real if potential existence "out there" in the world. His revived aristocracy was to renew society in the interests of the downtrodden; the search for reilluminated splendour was to be the people's riposte to the spiritual tawdriness of an age "bleared and seared" by trade. The tragedy was that the people, having won power and glory, were incapable of handling them. Berlioz lived to see that the rule of the people meant, not the rebirth of heroism, but the passive acceptance of vacuity of mind, indifference of feeling, want of discipline and lack of skill — the very reverse of the artistic virtues. Berlioz made his great opera about hope and betrayal in a world that had betrayed all that he held most dear. Since the Napoleonic era, decline has accelerated. *Modern Britain*, and this production, give another twist to the knife; though this may be the best we can do for Berlioz, it is not enough. Part One ends with mass suicide, triggered by betrayal. Part Two, to be produced next year, embraces hope. We must wait to see whether we, not merely English Opera North, can be worthy of it.

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Unpolitical but not innocuous

D. J. Enright

JAROSLAV SEIFERT
Selected Poetry
Translated by Ewald Osers; edited and with
additional translations by George Gibian
194pp. Deutsch. £9.95.
0233 979719

Born in 1901, Jaroslav Seifert became something that, as George Gibian notes, we don't seem to have in the West: a national poet. But the price to pay for a national poet is high, calling for the kind of shared feeling born out of decades of war, invasion, occupation and suffering. In such countries political poetry is bound to figure prominently, through reflecting national experiences, aspirations and distresses. But so, also, is non-political or supra-political poetry – through mitigating party polarizations, reinforcing the sense that life is more abiding, larger and richer than the most decent of ideologies can allow, and reminding us that politics is not an end but, at best, a means. This latter poetry risks condemnation as the opium of the people, albeit politics could more justly be termed the firewater. It can be left to prose writers like the author of *Mein Kampf* to administer the crude alcohol, to whip up nationalism in its malevolent forms. A national poet needs to pursue, in his perhaps ambiguous way, to celebrate peace, affection, natural and man-made beauty, and times past, and even that old-fashioned thing, joy. He will find his audience.

We are told that when, as Seifert's does, Czech poetry relies heavily on the sounds of the language, on patterns of vowels and consonants and so forth, it is difficult or even impossible to translate. All literary translation is difficult, and the translating of poetry demands special gifts, among them an intimacy with both languages and, in the case of the language translated into, a degree of inwardness and amplitude exceeding that which a major poet would find sufficient for his purposes. But if we think of what some translators have achieved, we need not be over-impressed by talk of untranslatability.

In these translations, at any rate, Seifert's early poetry sounds banal, and too easily arrived at. The "proletarian" verse, far from

being militant or full-blooded, is somewhat vapid: "Why, man feels just like a flower: / Don't pluck him, don't break him, don't tread on him!" And maybe pretty girls, "blushes, provocative eyes, deep sighs", loom larger than was ideologically proper. It seems that it took the approach of old age to give depth and a cutting edge to what in youth looks like a fairly ordinary strain of sentimentality. Nor do the avant-garde specimens of "Poetism", diluted Dadaism or faded Rimbaudery, carry much conviction:

But poetry
a honeyed moon dripping sweet juices
into the flowers' calixes
and

Where is my Bradshaw, that poetic book,
oh but the beauty of my wagons-list!
Oh wagons-restaurants and wagons-list!
Oh honeymoons!

Unless, of course, something quite remarkable has dropped away in the process of translation. Seifert was one of the first members of the Czech Communist Party, in 1921, but he was expelled in 1929 for being bolshevik about culture, and he was again attacked when the Party took over in 1948, for revealing himself as alien, bourgeois and escapist. For some years thereafter his publications consisted solely of translations, among them, characteristically, one of the Song of Solomon. Later, between 1968 (when he was elected acting chairman of the independent and short-lived Union of Writers) and 1975, only selections from his old works were available inside Czechoslovakia, apart from typed copies of current poems unofficially passed round.

He was, Gibian conveys, a poet of the senses, not of any variety, whether blissful or dark, of transcendence or despair; not intellectual or abstract, but concrete; in one sense of the expression, a people's poet.

With passion I read poetry
and loved music
and blundered, ever surprised,
from beauty to beauty.
But when I first saw
the picture of a nude woman
I began to believe in miracles.

In "Prologue", from a volume of 1967, a poet spots a bird hovering above its nest and can't

stop himself from thinking of the dimple in his girl's armpit; as he approaches trees and foliage he fancies he sees "the downy crutches of young women". "But it's not me", Seifert avows. But it was certainly like him, or like what he was soon to be. "All my life I have been faithful to love", yet it was love in retrospect that became his great theme, or his most engagingly explored. As far as can be judged from this selection, the quality of the poetry improves with the years. Old the poet may be, "but neither in memories nor in dreams / do legs get tired". They have carried him through a long love affair with Prague too, "the rose of Europe", as he calls the city in one of the extracts given here from his prose memoirs (published, incidentally, by the novelist Josef Skvorecky's émigré house, Sixty-Eight Publishers, in Toronto).

The later poems show a distinct kinship with those of the Polish poet, Czesław Miłosz. In the bitter-sweet "Merry-go-round with White Swan" Seifert writes:

There were two wars, disease and famine
and a cluster of suffering.
Life was not good on earth in those days.
But it was truly our life
no matter how it was.

While their histories, the histories of their countries, have much in common, Miłosz's acceptance seems harder won: at its weakest *voulu*, as if he is less cheerful than, in his horror of fashionable nihilism, he wants to be; at its strongest more stable and more informed than Seifert's. While persisting in their celebration of life, both poets can smile wryly at themselves and their obvious insignificance. "Poetry is with us from the start", Seifert says.

Like loving,
like hunger, like the plague, like war.
At times my verses were embarrassingly foolish.

"The history of my stupidity would fill many volumes", Miłosz writes; but elsewhere, and more resoundingly than Seifert:

Pure beauty, benediction: you are all I gathered
From a life that was bitter and confused,
In which I learned about evil, my own and not my own.

Wonder kept seizing me, and I recall only wonder . . .
I asked, how many times, is this the truth of the earth?
How can laments and curses be turned into hymns?

are no compensatory poetic merits). This is an inexplicable let-down: the poem has been often translated, and a glance, say, at Obolensky's plain prose version in the *Penguin Book of Russian Verse* would have demonstrated that McKane's "pots and pans" are really "bowlers hats" and that "sleepy lackeys stick out" means that "waiters hang around". (That McKane had access to Obolensky – though the latter does not feature in the acknowledgements – is clear from his version of Mandelstam's *Tristia*, which simply transposes Obolensky's prose, lightly adapted, into verse lines: this practice – highlighted by D. M. Thomas's recent Pushkin versions – deserves fuller discussion.)

McKane's other Blok selection sets the tone for an interesting aspect of his book: it is a short poem to Akhmatova, the first of many here addressed or dedicated by one poet to another. Was this emphasis deliberate? Are such poems characteristic of modern Russia? Anyhow, they lend the anthology, and its picture of Russian poetry, a familiar but perhaps rather inbred quality. More publicly orientated, though still highly personal, visions are the three great poem-cycles that McKane himself indicates as high points of his enterprise: Akhmatova's *Requiem*, Pasternak's *Zhivago* poems and Mandelstam's *To the Unknown Soldier*. The first two are widely known and much translated. The third excites great interest: a weird fragmented apocalypse, peering forward from 1937 into an age of ever more destructive warfare. Though it is fiendishly obscure in places, a skein of common imagery and untranslatable word-play holds it precariously together. But in this version there are so many gross errors

scarcely comprehensible in English (and there are two whole sections are reduced to

What makes you need to pretend, when you know better?
But the lips praised on their own, on their own feet too:
The heart beat strongly; and the tongue proclaimed its adoration.

(From *The Separate Notebooks*)
"Concrete" Seifert can indeed be. In a poem from a volume dated 1979, *An Umbrella from Piccadilly*, represented here by a selection and published in its entirety by London Magazine Editions in 1983, he recalls how, when he was fourteen or so, he was enraptured by a nude statue in a fountain. He managed to clasp her leg, but could not get any higher, and a shock of desire swept through his veins. (If Seifert places women on a pedestal, he is very soon clambering up after them.) A nearby policeman might easily have run him in – his fingerprints were on the girl's calf, probably he had committed an offence against public decency. Nothing happened – "Yet I was sentenced after all / to lifelong punishment."

And "alien" and rather worse than bourgeois is the title-poem of *An Umbrella from Piccadilly*, which exhorts anyone who is at his wits' end with love to try falling in love again, say with the Queen of England, whose "features are on every postage stamp / of that ancient kingdom". Seifert is – or seems – relaxed, informal, amused, confident of his public's interest and understanding. But it would be a mistake to stress the casual and even jaunty playfulness of this poetry. "Lost Paradise", in the same volume, begins by recounting the youthful fascination he felt for Old Testament women and their names – Adah is Ornament, Abigail the Fount of Exultation, Rachel is the Ewe Lamb, Tamar a Palm Tree – and then shifts to the fate of the Jews in Czechoslovakia. In a contrary movement, the sequence on the bombing of the town of Kralupy, from a collection of 1983, ends with the sole survivor of one household: a rooster who jeers at the poet's cry, "Never again, war!" But then, he is a bird. "The bastard!", and sides with the planes.

As the Swedish Academy declared in announcing the award of the Nobel Prize for Literature to him in 1984, "But Seifert has never been innocuous". When he was ill, we are told, crowds stood outside his house in concerned silence. We should be happy that he lived to die in his bed, in his eighty-fourth year. To be non-political is, in our world, to be highly political.

surrealistic gibberish. This is sad and surprising from a translator who generally sticks rather close to literal meaning, and whose best efforts hold an honoured place in the history of translation from the Russian.

Irina Ratushinskaya's *No, I'm Not Afraid* is at the opposite pole from McKane's: "context" is given such weight that half the book is editorial matter, the progress of the author's distasteful is charted minutely, and we are left in no doubt what we are to think. Ratushinskaya was arrested for "anti-State activity" of which her poems were supposedly part (though those predating the arrest show no more than a general romantic rebelliousness). She was recently released, half-way through a seven-year labour camp sentence, about which an astonishing amount of material – including photographs and a diary – has been here assembled. Her poetry is uneven, and a tendency to unforced abstraction is sometimes magnified by "translations" ("No, don't save, don't preserve, / We've grown so unused to protection! / O, we're not of those poets / Who seek armour in verses . . ." etc). But there are sharp and, and all right-thinking people will want it to develop in freedom. It would be nice to think that this volume had something to do with her release.

In *How Poetry Works* (304pp. Penguin. £3.95. 0 14 022584 6) Philip Davies Roberts argues for a new approach to poetry which is "firmly based on the sounds of our language". The book also includes a chronological anthology of poems that are printed in a way which, according to the author, will help the reader's perception of their rhythmic patterns.

Genre-mending

John Clute

BRIAN W. ALDIS WITH DAVID WINGROVE
Trillion Year Spree: The history of science fiction
511pp. Gollancz. £15.95 (paperback, £9.95).
055039426
C.N. MANLOVE
Science Fiction: Ten explorations
249pp. Macmillan. £25.
0333 38919 X

In 1973, when science fiction was still *terra incognita* for most literary historians, Brian Aldiss published a first short history of the field, which he called *Billion Year Spree*. It was something of a coup, and whether or not they fully concurred with its more sweeping judgments, critics soon found it impossible to ignore the seductiveness of the book's central insight. With a fine, commanding exuberance, Aldiss had shrugged aside the unbecomingly pretentious truffle-hunt through Dante and Lucian and even *Gilgamesh* that had so fatally unfocused some previous attempts to supply a provenance for the genre. Instead he fixed the beginnings of genuine SF in the Gothic romance, at that point when the industrial and scientific revolution of the early nineteenth century had begun to create the future as a project. The first science fiction novel, the genre's *Ur-text*, was therefore Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818). No one could fail to be ungrateful for that view of the forest.

It is a view that governs the presentation of the first half of *Trillion Year Spree*, an enormously expanded version of the earlier book which Aldiss has put together with the assistance of David Wingrove, an SF researcher most of whose contributions are seemingly restricted to a survey of the last fifteen years. The first half of *Trillion Year Spree*, as a consequence, retains enough of the generous, fierce sweep of its small ancestor, enough of its iconoclastic glee, that even some of Aldiss's wilder assertions seem ribald rather than merely eccentric. If he is led to conceive of Iris Murdoch as a "miniaturist", and her work as an example of the feminization of the mimetic novel, then that is perhaps a small price to pay for the extensive and adroit exegesis of *Frankenstein*, much expanded and improved for the new edition. If his reading of H. G. Wells assigns *Tono-Bungay* to a lower ranking than *The New Machiavelli*, then that is perhaps a consequence of the enormous head of steam he has built up by the time he has reached the end of the nineteenth century.

Moments of blithely callous foolishness do indeed surface throughout the first half of the book, and firmer editing might have saved some embarrassment, but in the intoxicating dews of Aldiss's thesis the reader is borne over most of the gaffes. The treatment of Edgar Allan Poe, of the important SF of Wells, of Robert Louis Stevenson, of Bram Stoker, and of other figures of like stature, is generally exemplary. And when the twentieth century is reached, *Trillion Year Spree* offers a welcome corrective to a dominant assumption that the true SF is a form of pulp literature begun in the United States in 1926, with the founding of the first American magazines specializing in the genre, and that the consequent history of SF is a history of the self-expression of the American imperium: American SF may be obsessed with the metaphysics of Alien contact, and with frontiers both geographical and psychological.

Interviews with Contemporary Novelists (397pp. Macmillan. £27.50. 0 333 39532 8) edited by Diana Cooper-Clark has recently been published. The book consists of twelve interviews with contemporary writers. They include: Carlos Fuentes, Margaret Drabble, Isaac Bashevis Singer, Vasily Aksyonov, Mary Gordon and Julio Cortázar. The authors discuss the situation of contemporary literature in particular the current state of play as far as Modernism is concerned, the formalist influences on their development, as well as the distinguishing features of their own writings. In addition, the editor asks many penetrating questions about the structure, plot and moral vision of their major works. Isaac Bashevis Singer declares to his interviewer that "good writers entertain gold readers and cheap writers entertain cheap readers and very bad writers entertain no one".

but British SF (Aldiss argues) has been shaped by quite different concerns: the theme of the "submerged nation" most famously dramatized in Wells's *The Time Machine*; the theme of the loss of Empire, indelibly pictured in the savage entropic landscapes of J. G. Ballard.

In the first half of the book, thematic criticism of this sort is generally kept under firm control. Unfortunately, neither the large scale of the book, nor his collaborator's wide reading in more recent authors, seems able to cope with the ramshackle expansion of the field since about 1970. Slowly but surely Aldiss's imaginative grasp on his material slackens, the exhilarated rapacity his thesis had engendered fades away, and *Trillion Year Spree* slackens into a potted *ad hoc* survey. There are moments – Aldiss's rewriting of his view on Philip K. Dick, for instance, which he integrates into a treatment, seemingly by Wingrove, of texts ignored in 1973 – when the concentrated energy of earlier passages returns for a page or so. But the spark has gone, and *Trillion Year Spree* loses its nous round about page 285.

From this point the text tends distressingly to characterize the more difficult books it treats as being "flawed", while at the same time enshrouding those same books in cliché and vaporous generalization. Readers of current SF will perhaps recognize that it is – at best –

injudicious to describe Gene Wolfe's *The Book of the New Sun* as "intelligent, meaningful sword and sorcery", or to suggest that Gwyneth Jones's *Divine Endurance* is a "near future tale". After these misrepresentations, both books are, of course, described as "flawed". Nor is it likely that informed readers of the genre will be much impressed by the critical acumen of a book which devotes several paragraphs of praise to the routine American series writer Paul O. Williams while sniping at the ambitious Kim Stanley Robinson, and which quotes a long bone-headed description of aliens from Phillip Mann's cumbersome *Master of Paxwax* while, on the same page, skidding edgily over Russell Hoban's magisterial *Riddley Walker*; the superb transformed English in which that book is told Aldiss/Wingrove describe as "a broken-down language", without quoting a word from it. Other scanted authors of at least some importance include Cordwainer Smith, Kris Neville, Avram Davidson, R. A. Lafferty, Piers Anthony and Brian Stableford. Lacking any idea how to present the elephantiasis growth of the genre, now that its props have been integrated into the visual and linguistic style of the world of 1986, *Trillion Year Spree*, which began with glee, ends in dogged gabble.

"When it comes to actual literary analysis",

says C. N. Manlove at the start of his *Science Fiction: Ten explorations*, "many commentators falter, give plot summaries with occasional comment, talk at length about the meaning of a text rather than the way that meaning is carried . . .". It was a joy of Brian Aldiss's original book that he did, precisely, talk about the way meaning is carried, and it is a frequent joy of C. N. Manlove's essays that most of them do the same. While not being entirely modest about his achievements, for he feels that few previous writers in the field have avoided the desecrating trivialities of theme criticism, he has in fact assembled an attractively modest book.

Texts of too catastrophic a paucity of imagination, like Isaac Asimov's *Foundation* trilogy, he may try over-diligently to describe in terms not too nakedly insulting; and when he fails, his distress shows all too clearly. Books whose "otherness" is vividly complex but unproblematical, like Brian Aldiss's *Hothouse*, or Robert Silverberg's *Nightwings*, he illuminates with suavity and bite. He is too reticent about Gene Wolfe's *The Book of the New Sun*. But generally the essays assembled here show a rare and uplifting attention to the shape of the books discussed. (The proof-reading, on a text evidently completed some time ago, is execrable.)

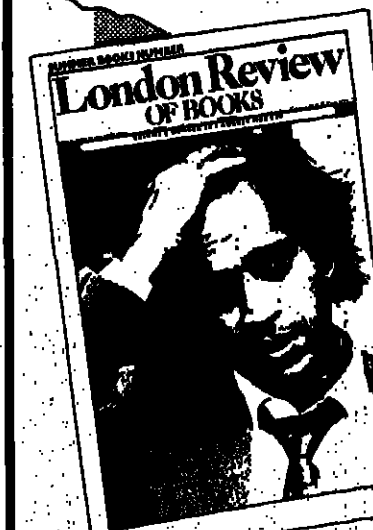
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Sean French,
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'The Boldest'

On the face of it, it seems rather odd to describe the LRB as 'bold' or 'experimental', because these words suggest something stylishly (or stylelessly) avant garde. In point of fact the *London Review of Books* is an austere and uncompromising paper, which looks more like one of the great 19th century periodicals (Blackwood's say) than a literary equivalent to the Face.

The true boldness of the LRB lies in the fact that it gives its writers enough space to get beneath the surface of a subject and say something significant. The rewards are Barbara Everett's definitive essay on Robert Browning, or Richard Rorty's three-part manifesto on how we should learn to think about truth, or Alan Bennett's memorial to his Uncle Clarence who died in the Great War.

'Peculiar Breadth'

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Lights out for the territory

Eric Korn

PAUL THEROUX
O-Zone
469pp. Hamish Hamilton. £9.95.
0241 119480

Americans need a frontier. The wilderness has gone, the new frontier of space has turned sour. Paul Theroux, gastronome of the wild and of the sour, has created a new future of new, internal, frontiers hacked out by several present-day American preoccupations: anxieties about illegal immigration, environmental destruction, inner city violence – the fears, in short, of being swamped, choked or mugged. In Theroux's America, the aliens are all within, the frontier is marked not by the stockade in the wilderness but by the security barrier in the city: not Fort Bravo but Check-Point Charlie.

The aliens are all who are not "Owners": roughly speaking, anyone without a credit card. They come in various shapes and clans, the subject of whispered rumours: Starkies, Skells, Troils, Shitters, Diggers and Roaches, dangerous elements created and magnified by the paranoia that goes with unearned possession.

Theroux's trick is to write a post-apocalypse novel in which there has been no apocalypse. His protagonists – Hardy Albright, American enterpriser, his wife, the discontented and superfluous Moura, his brother Hooper, bachelor, voyeur, sentimentalist, his teenage-genius-superbrat son, Fisher, the sinister Murdick and his frantic wife Holly – huddle in apartments fortified like bunkers, travel with elaborate weaponry, alarm systems, haunted by phantoms: in a word they inhabit the psychological landscape of a post-atomic America, familiar to the reader of science fiction: but the catastrophe is mainly inside their heads. The narrative is an ironic illumination of F. D. R.'s text about having nothing to fear but fear: in Fortress America, security breeds fear.

True, there have been disasters: the San Andreas Fault has opened a few new valleys and rearranged the topography of Los Angeles and environs; a leak of nuclear waste, emotionally described by the authorities as an "excursion" of material from the limestone caves, has led to the evacuation of southern Missouri and northern Arkansas, turned Ozark into the wittily renamed O-Zone, where 'the air is so bracing it gives off a green glow'.

Into this zone, the last acre of Wild America, which rumour fills with monsters, in fact the dumping ground of various more or less harmless "illegals", come Hardy and his party, for an original New Year outing, a sinister *frête champêtre*. Hardy has a pass – the first granted by the authorities: like gear-crazed picnicers, they bring alarms, trip-wires, perimeter radar, heat-seeking missiles against hostile creatures of the underbrush. New Year's Dinner is a travesty, astronauts' homogenized space-nosh squished through suck-holes in the face-plates of their elaborate (anti-contamination, anti-radiation, anti-Nature), armour. Especially armoured is young Fisher, genius at physics, dance at being human, in a constant state of rage and terror, half mad with acne and quantum theory, his problems multiplied by his off-scale IQ and his troublesome family. A gawky, gangling adolescent with an uncontrolled voice (we are told a dozen times that he squeaks or squawks or quacks or yawns or honks), Fisher gobbles and snarls at his keyboard, droning anyone within earshot with a drizzle of phallic insults: "You are a total tool; dong, herbert, truncheon, fuckwit". He is more filial towards the computer which nurtured him (his was a "remote student" excused bodily attendance at school on grounds of brilliance: he calls it "Pip") than to the impotent Hardy, who is only his legal parent: his natural father was a thrusting donor in an eagle-mask that Moura met at a "contact clinic" and has yearned for ever since.

The party is not a success: Fisher and the adults alike are consumed by private terrors and rages. What they most enjoy is reviewing the video of their trip in safety. Fisher, by cybernetic wizardry, enhances the image and discovers that the wilderness is indeed occupied. Three of them leave the abandoned

apartment block that they have fortified and take an outing. The encounter with the locals proves disastrous. Fisher is frightened out of a year's acne, the weapon-crazy Murdick has to be rescued at the cost of two nomads' lives.

They return to the qualified safety of New York City, a hyper-stratified megapolis of no-go areas and free-fire zones that resembles, if not the Big Apple of today, at least the city today's New Yorkers believe they live in. Hooper accompanies Murdick on an outing with "Godseye", a gang of murderous vigilantes pursuing "prostitutes, aliens, professional beggars, stowaways, crazies, whackoes, bigamists . . . burn them all". If these big-city Klansmen can't find major criminals, they will settle for minor ones: "Your litter thrower is your bag snatcher, your rapist . . . they don't know any better so it is unfair to try them." Fisher goes crazier: his mother revisits the "contact clinic" (now no longer concerned with infertility but a faintly veiled brothel); Hardy's employers want a fuller report on the zone which they regard as a potential site for a "thermal mountain" to change the weather (Hardy regards himself as a benefactor, a great frontiersman: in fact the main function of the thermal mountains is to help his employers dispose of their surplus asphalt: the most literal kind of dumping). Hooper has another hidden agenda: he has fallen for the image of a girl he caught sight of on their fatal excursion and since – obsessively – on the film record. Uncle and nephew return to the jungle. Hooper catches his girl but loses Fisher to the remnant of her band.

Thereafter Fisher's narrative is a captivity novel in the tradition that began with Captain John Smith. He endears himself to the savages (who turn out not to be so savage) by fixing a particle gun, a communications helmet. He travels with them through the wilderness, out of the Zone and into the Midwest, becoming less captive and more comrade: like any healthy American teenager kidnapped by wild Indians or at a well-run summer camp, he begins to stand tall, to fill out, to learn woodcraft and make a few fumbling sexual tentatives. Pursued by an increasingly distracted Hooper and his squaw in one helicopter, by Hardy and an increasingly murderous Godseye squad in another, the band makes its way through the abandoned or surviving towns of Middle America.

Theroux's book, which starts slowly, reaches a satisfactory tempo at last. Fisher grows up, Hooper gets his girl, Murdick is blown to pieces; Moura finds Fisher's father (they yawn the same way), the aliens fade back into the wilderness, taking Fisher with them; and America, perhaps, begins to knit its ravelled sleeves.

Claustrophobia can be a bit stuffy. Theroux is writing in, or near, a genre that is alien to him, and chooses to ignore its conventions. This can be time-consuming. He expounds *in extenso* what the savvy SF reader would swiftly pick up on, as he recognizes the book as a megacyte/retribalization fantasy-satire, with references to Judge Dredd, Thomas M. Disch, Robert Silverberg, Brian Aldiss, all the way back to the Eloi and the Morlocks and *A Story of the Days to Come*.

Theroux must know all this, but disdains it; even the reader to whom these prophetic-satiric calamities are new will be reduced to foot-stamping impatience by the sometimes sluggish tempo and the remorseless repetition that creeps in, fitfully, as though Theroux had lost faith in his own diction.

He was a perfect mimic. He did not use exaggeration. If anything it was understated. It was expert play-back, and because it was such an accurate echo, and not over mockery, it seemed especially cruel.

This is almost ditto-graphy. Theroux cannot produce a dull narrative, especially once his characters get on the road. Some of the ironies are too pat, the warnings too strident. He is at his best expressing disapproval, where his observation is acute beyond the rest of us.

Last made people gleam like meat, and [she] had a lusty rooked look, which at its piggiest was like a kind of pork sausage.

Theroux is expert at taking that kind of shine off things.

Is anybody there?

Colin Greenland

CARLSAGAN
Contact
432pp. Century. £10.95.
0712695036
ARTHUR C. CLARKE
The Songs of Distant Earth
182pp. Grafton. £9.95.
0346 126884

The Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence enacts, as a scientific endeavour, one of the most potent founding wishes of science fiction: to find someone up there who likes us. The implied assumptions are many: we cannot know how many because we cannot know what sort of logic an alien intelligence may obey. But if there are aliens, goes the all too human response, and if any of them have developed capacities comparable to ours, they will surely share our urge to broadcast. Let us therefore listen to the stars.

In his introductory note to *The Songs of Distant Earth* Arthur C. Clarke, admitting that the issue is controversial, hopes for finance for "a decade or two of benign neglect, while the radioastronomers, like gold-miners panning for dust, quietly sieve through the torrents of noise pouring down from the sky". Eleanor Arroway, heroine of Carl Sagan's *Contact*, is an avid prospector.

When she thought carefully about it, she was surprised that, in the search for extraterrestrial intelligence, what could be done was so far ahead of what had been done. The resources that had been devoted to this question were trifling, she thought. She was hard pressed to name a more important scientific problem.

This, you must understand, is not to be read ironically, as reflecting on Eleanor's personality, or her situation as a clever, lonely young research associate at an isolated observatory in Puerto Rico. Sagan's metaphors are not to be brought home. Eleanor Arroway is of the faithful, as is Carl Sagan. *Contact* is the story of their reward.

For SETI is an act of faith, of secularized prayer: a sort of scientific seance. Is anybody there? Do they have a message for us? Sagan attacks contemporary American evangelists with their talk of Rapture and Advent, but when Eleanor receives the Word, she is thereafter snatched up in a chariot to Heaven, welcomed by her dead father, then restored to Earth with proof of the existence of God, and the message that everything is meant. To Sagan the whole idea of crossing the terrestrial threshold and bridging interstellar space has the form and character of a religious experience, a vision and vocation. In the summary above, only the term "chariot" is inexact. The Machine built for Arroway's team is more like Noah's Ark, constructed on Earth to celestial specifications. Not that Sagan is very interested in the drama or poignancy of human beings working together to build something they cannot understand (except to make it the target for a convenient terrorist attack by rival religious fanatics). He is not very interested in the possibilities of human society at all (as he shows by his touchingly inept attempts to provide his characters with some sexual affection), or any kind of social intercourse, really, apart from fluent, spontaneous discussion of scientific and philosophical questions.

Despite his faith in the comprehensibility of alien logic, Sagan's image of alien engineering is authentically bizarre. The Machine is an inscrutable piece of apparatus, part geometric solid, part protoplasmic pulp, equipped with five armchairs. Shamanic brocade, clearly. "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic", as Arthur C. Clarke put it, and as an Indian scientist attempts to quote at a symposium in *Contact*. In Augustan manner, Sagan flatters Clarke by having the character refer to him as "a philosopher in our part of the world". *The Songs of Distant Earth* returns the compliment by commemorating Sagan as "a writer of scientific romance, early Third Millennium", could it be that Clarke is simultaneously complimenting him on his fiction and insulting, jealously, his scientific achievements?

Clarke has already told a dream of divine intervention and the second Creation in 2001 and its sequel 2010. In *The Songs of Distant*

Earth, a total and meticulous revision of a short story first published in 1958, there is eschatology, even a new Eden, but no message from space. SETI has drawn a blank, though Sagan has been awarded the consolation prize of having a star named after him. Towards the Sagan system voyages the Magellan, one of the last and fastest cryonic arks to flee Earth before its destruction in the nova of the Sun. Needing a hundred thousand tons of ice to rebuild the conical shield that protects the Magellan from cosmic debris, Commander Loren Lorensen breaks the journey at Thalassa, a world almost entirely under water. On its only islands, a small volcanic group, he finds a colony of humans, descendants of a space expedition given up for lost 750 years earlier. Though heavily dependent on robot systems still operating, the Lassans have relaxed into lassitude. In an area slightly larger than Hawaii they have achieved a kind of tropical utopia: colourful, permissive, rather languid, terribly considerate. Their earthly paradise has its appeal for regimented, spacefaring men who have seen their planet burn to a cinder. Loren falls in love with a native woman, Mirissa.

Clarke is almost as unhandy as Sagan at presenting sexual encounters. His romantic circumlocutions should recommend themselves to Grafton's copywriters as blurb material for the paperback edition: "Between two worlds, they became one", he euphemizes; and, yet more lyrically: "Even as he froze the seas of Thalassa, his own heart was beginning to thaw." Periphrasis has to stand for passion while Clarke pleads, rather too often and too explicitly, the Lassans' cultivated placidity in defence of the novel's lack of conflict. A major factor in Lassan enlightenment is their ignorance of God or sin, all such references having been deleted, in a spirit of totalitarianism Clarke regretfully approves, by the selectors whose job it was to stock the data banks of the starships with samples of human culture. As in *Contact*, this declared hostility to extant religions is a strong indication that what is being written here is new myth. For it is ultimately not Clarke's ambitious imagination, or his skilful depiction of the joys of reason, that characterizes *The Songs of Distant Earth*, but rather the pathos of his vision of humanity, burdened by knowledge and loss, exiled from innocence and tranquillity, forever searching the stars for the face of God.

Crime file

T. J. Binyon

RICHARD BARTH
The Co-op Kill
215pp. Gollancz. £8.95.
0375 037784

Margaret Binton and her gang of old-age pensioners are at war again with the rich and the powerful. This time the villain is a New York property developer who is trying to get rid of the last two tenants of 621 West Ninety-first Street, so that he can replace the building with a luxury apartment block. And, of course, the poor chap hasn't a chance when pitted against the elderly wiles of Mrs Binton and her friends. Light and entertaining, with a good original murder method which isn't given the prominence it deserves.

SIMON BRETT
A Nice Class of Corpse
187pp. Macmillan. £7.95.
0333 417224

The Devereux residential hotel in Littlehampton is a very select establishment, severely and genteelly run by its proprietress, Miss Nuthall. Nevertheless, one of its elderly inhabitants is a murderer. Mrs Pargeter, the latest arrival, a lively unconventional widow who has inherited some odd friends and unusual skills from her husband, sets out to discover why all her companions seem bent on knocking off all the others. Amusingly described setting, and Mrs Pargeter could run and run; the book is frothy, but all in all a thinish and insubstantial concoction.

What Kubla did in Xanadu

Peter Reading

DAVID BUTLER
The Men Who Mastered Time
262pp. Heinemann. £10.95.
0434 099066

Into the cosy Oxford college rooms of Dr Hawkesworth one bleak November afternoon intruaps his friend and erstwhile pupil Lord Augustus Steerforth. The aristocrat and his chum Inayat Khan (evacuated from Amritsar to an English boarding-school in 1947 when riots accompanying Independence left him an orphan) had shown brilliant promise in mathematics and physics in the days when Hawkesworth was their housemaster. Latterly, established boffins of international repute, the brainy pair has been involved in hush-hush governmental work, the nature of which Steerforth unfolds to the novel's narrator, Hawkesworth, now an elderly professor of English.

By subjecting speeded-up matter in a particle accelerator to huge gravitational force, Steerforth and Khan have been able to simulate mini black holes, capable of causing the time dilation of anything drawn to them. The

phenomenon is developed to produce a time travel machine. A bit of physics jargon is bandied about in the interests of plausibility. There is reference to ergosphere, event horizon and gravitational radius (in connection with this, though, the repeated misspelling of the German physicist Karl Schwarzschild's name does not serve to bolster confidence). A mouse is catapulted into the future and mislaid, but once this teething trouble is rectified it is the turn of the men themselves. Of course the government is anxious to finance the research because of its defence implications: "You could make your own weapons disappear from that part of the space-time continuum after the aggressor has launched his attack, and reappear a day or an hour before the attack."

The pace quickens. Khan (who, it transpires, is Coleridge's Kubla) purloins a lot of spare parts, fabricates a personal time machine (a stately pleasure-dome) and vanishes in the fourth dimension with his Rasta girlfriend (an Abyssinian dulcimer-plucker). Worried that Kubla/Inayat might tamper with the history of the universe, past and future, Steerforth builds his own time ship and, with Hawkesworth and a Coleridge specialist American girl research student, commutes to thirteenth-century

Xanadu to discomfit the Tartar and destroy his miracle of rare device. In the ensuing denouement, Inayat is brought back to the present (for old times' sake) along with Coleridge himself, who seems to have been down there on a vision in 1294. The Khan is rehabilitated in Woodstock, safely out of mischief . . .

The Men Who Mastered Time is fast-moving, its tone an agreeable blend of H. G. Wells and Flash Gordon, with the eternal verities of a boys' comic where "a man who cheats at erick-et is capable of any enormity". Quite why we have, throughout the book, "Khan carefully planting [Coleridgeque] clues over the years, as a sort of test of our ingenuity", is never properly explained. The test, though, is entertaining and, as the American student explains, "Esteesian" (from Coleridge's initials S. T. C. – "just a little inside joke").

The quasi-moral issue which perhaps we are meant to confront ("It is an act of fearful and overweening pride to think that we can judge the best interests of mankind and intervene accordingly in its history") is unstimulating; but evocations of place and the donnish persona of the narrator are affecting, and the ingestion of Bollinger, fino, malt whisky, Rémy Martin and Châteaufort Beauséjour is heartening, in art as in life.

Where it's happening

Toby Fitton

PAUL PICKERING
Perfect English
205pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £9.95.
0279 78952X

Except perhaps for a novel about Lebanese politics, one cannot imagine a theme more confusing in the nice balancing of moral issues than American cultural benevolence in present-day Nicaragua. The "Perfect English" of Paul Pickering's title is a Californian educational foundation that has attracted to its mission camps a young English Catholic idealist and his American girlfriend. Both are particularly anxious to serve under Father Anselm, a charismatic (and indeed sexually attractive) priest who is deeply into liberation theology, and far from averse to political intrigue on behalf of the Sandinistas. "Liberation theology", the slightly doubting

Johnny Morgan is assured, "is where it's happening", and there are plenty of happenings to prove it in the excesses of some exceedingly black comedy. A high official in State Security tells the hero, "Best leave truth to the politicians", a thriller-writer's cliché that is played out here in the triple-crossings of Central American chicanery and the gradually unfolding layers of theological doubt. Mr Palmerston, a gruesome psychopathic cannibal leader, discovered with his pirate code deep in the jungle, is in the end one of the more plausible characters in the author's gallery of weirdos.

Father Anselm, so deeply imbued with liberationist theories, is not as fully developed as he could have been. He has many of the characteristics of the traditional whisky priest – "politics was Father Anselm's whisky; you could almost smell it on his breath" – and he is putty in the hands of cynical manipulators able to exploit his idealism. The rich, beautiful American girlfriend, "sick of being a marshmallow, liberal aid worker", is likewise all too easily

picked on and used by unscrupulous and ill-specified functionaries. Nice innocent Johnny, barely out of Ampleforth and Cambridge, is assailed by "damp English doubts", political and personal, about the priest and the girl, but lacks the courage of his uncertainties. He is lucky to escape with his life.

Perfect English begins conventionally with "an unforgiving sun" beating down on an anticlerical riot in Nicaragua, and ends on "a lovely summer afternoon" as the young couple go off to live happily ever after. The events in between are far from conventional. The complexities of the Nicaraguan situation provide plenty of opportunities for fairly bleak humour – a party of "Oldsters for Peace" comes out to support Sandinista Youth – but the overwhelming grimness of the political reality quickly cancels out these lighter touches. As in the author's previous book, *Wild About Harry*, farce and thriller do not consort well with each other. The final effect is much more solemn than may have been intended.

Ungentlemanly in England

J. K. L. Walker

GEORGE MACBETH
Dizzy's Woman
171pp. Cape. £9.95.
0234 028014

History as seen from the salon or the boudoir appeals to the cynic in all of us. It is a relief to be reminded from the pages of a Pepys, a Saint-Simon or a Creevey of the threads of ambition, incompetence or lust that link us all in humanity with the great figures of the past. Certainly, the young Disraeli, as he elbows his way through George MacBeth's highly coloured version of the politician's early years, appears enjoyably in the grip of all three weaknesses – for even the debts which forced him into marriage arose from pleasures rather than duties.

Among the former was an affair with Frances Vane-Tempest, Marchioness of Londonderry, and *Dizzy's Woman* is cast in the form of a series of fictional letters from Disraeli to "Vane" that are presumed to fill in a gap in an actual correspondence between the two. The year is 1842, a period which saw the real Disraeli, as a leader of the "Young England" group of Tory MPs, busily nipping the tail of Peel's ministry. Lord John Manners, another prominent member of the group, is remembered for a couplet which appeared to embody Young England's romantic feudalism: "Let wealth and commerce, laws and learning die / But give us back our old Nobility". Manners has a passing mention in *Dizzy's Woman* and George Smythe is more solidly incorpo-

rated, but it is the theatrical rather than the more solemn, *noblesse oblige* aspects of the movement that appeal to MacBeth, particularly as embodied in the ridiculous Eglinton Tournament, in which the old Nobility, or some of them, dressed themselves up in armour, and scrambled about in Ayshire mud and rain. The fusion of medievalism of the event has been seen as deriving from Kenelm Digby's *The Broad Stone of Honour*, originally subtitled *Rules for the Gentlemen of England*, but MacBeth's version of the Tournament, recollection of which forms a narrative and symbolic core to the novel, is short on gentlemanliness. Rather, it was the "last gasp of a Regency salaciousness".

This is a quality, however, which breathes vigorously again in these pages. Disraeli, both

before and after his marriage, appears as the most lecherous of Regency bucks in his pursuit of Vane-Tempest, whose own carnality it seems matches that of "the most versatile and expedient of Turkish harlots", in various venues from the laundry-room to the coal-face of one of her own mines. There is much whalebone-twanging and ham-handling, but also a great deal of wit and scrupulously researched background information used to build up a convincing picture of English life of the period: "the boiling hell of the 1840s", as MacBeth somewhat melodramatically characterizes it. Money-penny and Buckle it may not be, but dandyish high spirits, sharp observation and a brooding concern with the Condition of England lift *Dizzy's Woman* clear of the froth of sexy historical fantasy.

("Translating Proust"). Claud Cockburn ("Spying in Spain and Elsewhere") and Dwight Macdonald ("Notes on Selling Out"); memoirs by Dan Jacobson, Luis Buñuel and Sonnenberg; and much else besides. The editor's stylishly compact autobiography (less than twenty-five of *A Grand Street Reader's* handsomely wide-margined pages) provides the best introduction to *Grand Street*, shedding some light on its origins, and setting the tone: "I went to two kinds of boarding school. One kind taught Robert Frost and took a position on Alger Hiss and on Ezra Pound and the Bollinger Prize. They were among the first places I heard, 'We don't care how much money your family has.' An out-and-out lie. I was sure."

Groveller

Gerald Mangan

HOWARD JACOBSON
Redback
314pp. Bantam. £10.95.
0593012127

Leon Forelock, the narrator of *Redback*, sets the tone holdy on the first page of this "spiritual history", with a Cambridge anecdote about a student who wakes in his lodgings one morning, after a long night with an agile Australian, and finds that his departed guest has defecated on him. This "inconceivable maidenly audacity" awakens antipodean longings in him, which have since led to a twenty-five-year sojourn in Australia; and it is not hard to guess, long before he tells us, that the victim of this indignity is himself. Forelock is "a born crawler", as his name suggests, whose taste for humiliation has just been cruelly satisfied by a particularly virulent relative of the tarantula. A well-aimed bite on the scrotum by a "Redback" has left him with an incurable erection, which he recognizes as a fitting climax to a career of degradation.

As might be expected from the author of *Coming from Behind* (1983) and *Peeping Tom* (1984), private parts figure large in this new farce; and its Australian setting gives them ample room for manoeuvre. The body politic is shown to be inseparable from the bodily functions; and Forelock speaks as a reformed reactionary – a star graduate in Moral Decencies, recruited at Cambridge by the CIA and sent Down Under as a moral activist in the cause of the white orthodoxies. Much of the novel is concerned with his various campaigns against the myriad menaces of the 1960s – the bolshies, hippies, blacks, orientals, gays, panders and feminists who threaten the status quo ("to boot the bludgers up the blot", in local parlance); but his retrospective view is coloured by his recent conversion to the libertine Left, which has summarily rejected him, and his unspeakable disorder. He is now an embittered outsider, distrusted by both sides and under constant surveillance.

Forelock traces the roots of his *malaise* to an "upper-lower-working-class" childhood in a rain-sodden cul-de-sac in Partington, which provides the butt for many stand-up wisecracks in a Lancashire accent ("An ideal site for a nuclear dump"). The tendency to grovel is a legacy from his father, a diminutive philanthropist who absconded to Sydney with a lady in a fox-fur, leaving nine-year-old Leon behind with two shapeless spinster aunts addicted to ruins and operettas. His own escape-route is via Cambridge, where a casuistical priest seduces him effortlessly, in more ways than one, on behalf of "Freedom Academy International". The *Zeitgeist* of the duffel-coat era, with its dismal asexuality, points him clearly in the direction of Southampton.

The caricature of Australian cultural life is often horribly convincing. It is a clever satirical strategy, however, that makes Forelock a defender of its sun-struck philistinism. Bigotry, sentimentalism, snobbery and promiscuity are represented by a rogues' gallery of suburban intellectuals – including Orel Rosenfeldt, the epicurean professor of Pessimistic Philosophy at the University of Noonthorungee ("I am what you might call an equivocator"), the francophile Lobelia Sneddon ("Superbe – that means superb"), and the lugubrious Cooney Brothers, who encircle their adversaries at cocktail parties and "sadden them into submission". His compatriots are sharply drawn, caught in the paradoxes of exile, but his Irishmen tend to be stereotypes, dribbling mystical nostalgia into their beer.

As a comedy of sexual and political disenchantment, *Redback* is effervescent but long-winded. Forelock's deranged cynicism, soon becomes wearisome, and there is more than a little confusion in his paranoid critique of feminism – which has reduced Australian males to "the sad defensive huddle of a threatened species". When his long affair with a pair of clean-limbed synchronized-swimmers comes to an end, with a disagreement over the shaving of their pubic hair, it is his pursuit of the unshaven feminist that exposes him to the predatory spider. The crisis is plainly symbolic as well as fateful, but it is hard to know how much to read into its contrived absurdities.

The first man in the street

David Coward

RÉTIF DE LA BRETONNE

Les Nuits de Paris
Edited by Jean Varloot and Michel Delon
403pp. Paris: Gallimard. 37 fr.
My Father's Life
Translated by Richard Veasey
170pp. Gloucester: Alan Sutton. Paperback, £2.95.
0186299 1765

Rétif's rambling *Nuits de Paris* (1788-94), here judiciously reduced to one-ninth of its original size, reads like a mix of Pops, Mayhew and the *News of the World*, with regular editorials which the *Daily Telegraph* would not disown. By day, Rétif churned out tales and novels. After dusk, he went out to watch Paris by night – not the Paris of the Grand Tour, but the Paris of crowded streets, seedy taverns and the squalid poor. By the late 1780s, he had turned the city into a storehouse of memories. A house on a corner or perhaps a date scratched on a parapet of the Île Saint-Louis triggered not so much emotion recollected in tranquillity as succulent mounds to be relished as though time had been abolished. Some memories were personal and painful: here, on such a date, he said goodbye to Louise. Others were public: just there, he once saw a rigged pedestrian run down by a rich man's coach. The result is a rag-bag of anecdote, observation and prejudice, of personal philosophy, documentary journalism and bizarre philosophizing. If the mixture were a shade weaker, *Les Nuits* would be gossip; a little stronger, and it would be a work of genius. As it stands, it is the oddest, most immediate and most revealing picture of Paris seen from below.

Rétif claimed he was the only writer who understood the poor, because he lived with them. He mistrusted and feared them, and remained eternally amazed by the cruel, gener-

ous and unpredictable things they did. On the Place Saint Michel, he observes three men hacking a hole in the wall of a private house. In the rue de la Huchette, he stumbles on a group of medical students making off with a body for dissection. He spies and eavesdrops. He watches a house burn down, finds a corpse in an alley, sees the pickpockets and card-sharps at work. In the rue de la Tannerie, he has to hold his nose against the stench. He grumbles at the state of the streets and complains about the harshness of prison sentences, the absence of public lavatories, conditions in the maternity ward (from his room he hears the women scream) and he inveighs against popular assemblies which are an excuse for public drunkenness and lechery.

Rétif's Paris is a dangerous city where a man's purse, his morals and his life are permanently at risk. Occasionally he intervenes to right a wrong, and he invents a philanthropic patroness who gives shelter to the distressed. But most often he feels helpless. With an indignation which runs from a prissy tut-tut to earnest rhetoric, he warns that Paris is simmering and must soon boil over. "A terrible Revolution is in the making!" The rich exploit their privileges and forget their obligations. The capital's youth have got out of hand and threaten the rule of law and order. The government's failure to reform the tax system and control spiralling wages will hamper trade, make workers unproductive and endanger France's competitiveness in international markets.

Like most eighteenth-century observers, Rétif distinguishes clearly between the deserving and the undeserving poor. The indolent and the feckless merit harsh treatment, but every encouragement should be given to the honest casualty – like the unemployed carpenter who survives by breeding rabbits on discarded lettuce-leaves, or the man who collects broken glass and sells it to bottle-manufacturers, or the "décolleur d'affiches" who scrapes

out-of-date posters off walls and recycles the paper. Rétif chronicles the effects of what he sees as a moral crisis, but the solutions he urges are a mixture of social reform and Smiles-ish self-help. It is puzzling that Jean Varloot, in his otherwise perceptive introduction, should present Rétif as a kind of proto-Marxist enemy of property. His only quarrel with property was that it was unequally distributed. After all, his father, a small peasant proprietor in a Burgundian village, owned just enough land to make him independent and allow him to be good.

La Vie de mon père (1779) is the biography of a very good man indeed. He is "the best family man of the century" and an agricultural innovator, and as such combines Rétif's paternalistic ideals with his bourgeois brand of economics. The mood is pious, hagiographical even (cheap reprints were distributed as prizes to good nineteenth-century Catholic children), and Edme Rétif's unrelieved rustic virtue is held up as a standing reproach to the wickedness of cities. Rétif is sentimental and respectful here: his very next book, *La Malédiction paternelle*, was to show a sterner face of patriarchalism.

Indeed, he is least reliable when writing about his past, as Jean Charleux recently demonstrated during the first conference organized by the Société Rétif at Auxerre, at which Rétif's growing reputation as a witness to his age was amply documented. *My Father's Life*, with its pendant, *The Ploughman's Wife*, both faithfully translated by Richard Veasey, spins filial devotion and documentary realism into a rare picture of rural life under the ancien régime. Rétif, a Parisian by adoption and a countryman at heart, tells us more about village life than Marmontel and less about Paris than Mercier. But he came closer than anyone to conveying the views of ordinary people. Diffident, humourless, opinionated and endowed with a splendid capacity for moral outrage, Rétif the night watchman and country chronicler was the original man in the street.

Absolutely passionate

Peter France

JEANSGARD

L'Abbé Prévost: Labyrinthes de la mémoire
239pp. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
135fr.
2 1303 9282 2

"To write once more about *Manon Lescaut* may seem absurd", says Jean Sgard at the beginning of his new book, which is indeed centred on the famous short novel more correctly known as the *Histoire du Chevalier des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut*. But if anyone is entitled to write such a book, it must be Professor Sgard, the person mainly responsible for the impressive new edition of Prévost's works published by the Presses Universitaires de Grenoble. In 1968 he gave us a long and detailed study, *Prévost romancier*; here, in a brief essay, he distils a reading of Prévost which is far from banal. The footnotes draw discreetly on his complete knowledge of the secondary literature (quite a bit of it his own work), but this is an incitement to those who have never gone beyond *Manon* to plunge into Prévost's other labyrinths, as well as a revelation of some of the complexities in an apparently simple tale.

The strength of Sgard's insights comes more from his virtual identification with the work than from any very surprising new approach. He insists, as one might expect, on the absolute passions of Prévost's people; for these self-blinded but noble men (the women remain a *terra incognita*), the world is well lost for a tragic love whose obscure origins can be guessed at in the clashes and closeness of parents and children, brothers and sisters. Much of the book is thematic criticism, concerned with the spatial and temporal dimensions of Prévost's work and with such obsessive images as the labyrinth and the tomb – best manifested in the caves of Rummy Hole where the hero of *Cleveland* flees from his natural father (Oliver Cromwell), lives in happy proximity with his mother and encounters by chance his step-father at the bedside of the wife he has killed.

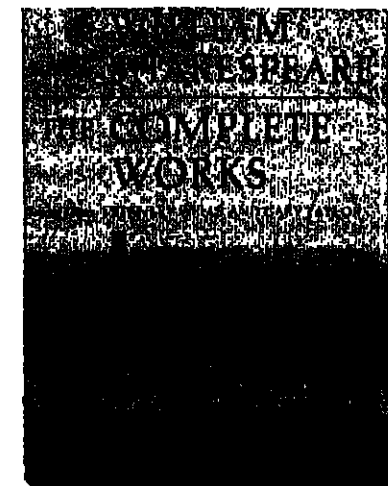
The labyrinths of the title are those of fallible memory and of narration. Prévost's first-person novels are constantly leading the reader into an impasse of uncertainty; *Manon Lescaut* is seen here less as burning authorial self-revelation than as the dramatic monologue of an invented personage who creates his past and its inhabitants, for all the world like a novelist. And a novel like *Cleveland* raises conundrums of sincerity and self-justification which anticipate those we find in Rousseau's *Confessions*.

There are many other interesting suggestions here. For example, Sgard argues convincingly that *Manon Lescaut* is not a depiction of the permissively amoral Regency period; but belongs to the very end of Louis XIV's reign, a time when the old authority (of fathers, police and Church) is still in place, however tarnished it may look to its victims. He also gives an account of *Manon's* publishing history, showing that with at least 234 different editions from 1731 to 1981 it is the most frequently published of all French novels with the exception of Fénelon's *Télémaque* (often a set book in nineteenth-century schools). And not the least of his offerings is a brief essay on Prévost's style, with some sensitive remarks on the reworking of *Manon* for the 1753 edition.

It is perhaps in these remarks on style above all that the author, speaking with the inventiveness of an editor who has lived with these novels for many years, shows himself to be an unusually eloquent advocate for Prévost. He has, as he declares in his final sentence, "la passion de Prévost", and writes so as to communicate this. It may be feared, however, that our present-day reading habits are such that for all their strange richness, *Le Doyen de Killerling*, the *Mémoires d'un homme de qualité* and the rest of these complicated and sprawling romances of the memory will never really hold the modern reader, who will continue to enjoy *Manon Lescaut*, while finding in Jean Sgard's books a most attractive representation of all the rest.

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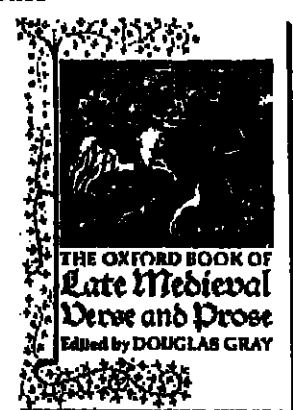
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Conspicuous construction

David Cannadine

DAVID PEARCE
London's Mansions: The palatial houses of the nobility
224pp. Batsford. £25.
0713446528

Although *Upstairs, Downstairs* was nearly as popular a soap opera as *Brideshead Revisited*, many people continue to believe that the British aristocracy has always been an almost exclusively rural élite: an up-market version of *The Archers*, whose existence never extended far beyond the pages of *Country Life*. Yet as Sir Lewis Namier long ago pointed out, the British upper classes in their heyday were an essentially "amphibious" group, as much at home in the metropolis as in the shires. For it was not just that some of them owned large swathes of London's land: as the governing class, the wealth élite and the centre of high society, they were obliged to spend much of their time in the capital, where many of them lived in suitably splendid style.

And yet, while we seem obsessively interested in the English country house, these stately homes of London have attracted scarcely any notice, either from scholars or from sightseers. Accordingly, David Pearce's book is much to be welcomed, as the first serious attempt to explore this urban dimension of aristocratic life. He begins with an account of the late medieval riverside palaces of the great prelates, and then examines the massive houses in the Strand which were built by the new aristocracy of the later Tudors and early Stuarts. But apart from a few incongruous relics such as the Savoy Chapel, almost nothing survives today of these early mansions.

Predictably, it is only when he reaches the Restoration and the Great Fire that Pearce's account really gets going, as he begins to follow the upper classes on their inexorable drive to the west, through Piccadilly and Mayfair, until they were finally halted in the nineteenth century at Park Lane. The great houses built for Clarendon (soon demolished) and for Marlborough (soon desecrated) are fully and vividly described, as are the Palladian alterations to Burlington House which were completed in the 1720s. With these precedents to guide them, the Venetian oligarchy of Georgian England thereupon abandoned itself to an orgy of urban aggrandizement, as Chesterfield, Devonshire, Lansdowne, Norfolk and Spencer aspired to outdo each other in the magnificence of their metropolitan mansions.

The second great wave of building began in

the late eighteenth century, with the advent of a new breed of supra-national, British aristocrats. Gorged with the unprecedented wealth derived from booming agriculture, from government stocks and sinecures, and from the mines and urban development of the Industrial Revolution, men like Wellington, Dudley, Grosvenor, Londonderry and Stafford constructed and created sumptuous urban palaces, partly to demonstrate in the most ostentatious manner that they had, indeed, "arrived", and partly to display their matchless collections of art treasures purchased or plundered from the impoverished nobility and royalty of continental Europe.

Even on into the third quarter of the nineteenth century, such houses were still being built for grandees like Buccleuch and Wimbome. But by 1914, the great days of these houses were already over. As the aristocracy ceased to dominate government and society, and as they felt obliged to restructure their finances, their town palaces seemed increasingly uneconomical and unnecessary. Between the wars, Devonshire, Grosvenor, Lansdowne and Norfolk Houses were demolished, and those which survived after 1945 were soon converted to other uses. Today, only Apsley House still conveys a sense of its past greatness, and that is owned by the State.

As the first study of the subject since 1908, this is at once a tardy and timely book. But it is seriously flawed, both in exposition and in methodology. The early chapters jump around disconcertingly from the thirteenth century to the twentieth, while the later shift from chronological to thematic treatment seems no more satisfactory. In trying to include almost every house, the text often degenerates into a laundry list of owners and occupants, architects and builders, paintings and sculptures. Yet such bastions of aristocratic influence as Holland House and Carlton House Terrace are barely mentioned at all.

The real problem is that *London's Mansions* suffers from an inadequate historical perspective. It does not inspire confidence to be told that "the governance of the country ceased to be essentially aristocratic after 1815", or that "the nineteenth-century industrialist and entrepreneur" was "rewarded for the accumulation of wealth by the accumulation of titles". Above all, we obtain no real idea of how the inhabitants of these houses – both above and below stairs – actually lived. Clearly, what is needed is a full-scale social and architectural history of life in the English town house. Perhaps Mark Girouard – who has himself recently moved from the country to the city – can be tempted?

Spaces for living

Julian Munby

MAURICE BARLEY
Houses and History
290pp. Faber. £27.50.
0571136311
R. J. BROWN
Timber-Framed Buildings of England
368pp. Hale. £12.95.
070902912

Traditional architecture and the history of the countryside attract a good deal of attention these days. Maurice Barley has used the results of much recent work to give us an admirable account of the present state of research. He began with the title "The Archaeology of the House", but felt that might be misleading, in implying a text devoted solely to excavated remains. Archaeologists do, of course, spend much time excavating buildings, but their evi-



The roof of Quarr Abbey, Isle of Wight, taken from Nicholas Pevsner's *The Best Buildings of England*, an anthology compiled by Bridget Cherry and John Newman (232pp. Viking. £14.95. 067081283 8).

dence necessarily consists largely of floor-levels, plan types, and the materials used in the wall footings. But the archaeology of standing buildings, initiated by the Victorians with copious studies of cathedrals and churches, has of recent years come to the fore again, and is now also applied to houses. Buildings threatened with destruction or alteration are being measured and drawn, picked at with trowels and chisels, and subjected to the same level of investigation as the buried remnants of earlier times. The work of the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments has also set high stan-

dards in its inventories, and brought to light many unknown buildings across the country. Then again there is the somewhat more refined pursuit of architectural history, where the considerations of stylistic change and attribution are foremost in studying the design and layout of the great country house.

These different approaches are partly imposed by the period and type of building being studied, but they deal with the same problem, in linking physical change in buildings to the social history of their occupants. Professor Barley is familiar with all of them, and is well placed to write this summary of the development of English domestic architecture, which is based on the most recent research of others, as well as his own extensive work in the field.

An unusual aspect of the book, therefore, is his consideration of the full range of building activity, passing in turn from larger country houses to farmhouses, cottages and urban building, which are treated as a continuum of tradition, in which builders or architects responded to the needs of different classes of client. The chronological spread is also wide, from the timbered halls of the Anglo-Saxons to the Victorian terraced house (though coverage of the final period is not even). A general division of the material into two sections, before and after 1550, reflects the true break in building traditions at the end of the medieval period. Within each half the use of building materials and methods is first discussed, and then the building types.

The concern is less with the details of architectural features, and more with the interpretation of the living space, and the uses to which it was put. Episcopal residences are seen not as mere expressions of prelatial grandeur, but as working establishments suitable for large but mobile households; they contrast with the remarkable range of houses built for medieval clergy. The development of lodgings for household and retainers is a late-medieval feature, parallel to the appearance of the first multiple housing in towns. The distribution of other types of rural housing raises questions about wealth and status in different parts of England, while the problem of distinguishing what condition of men lived in "peasant" houses is fully dealt with. Changes in styles of living are to be seen in the move downstairs from the first-floor solar to the ground floor parlour, the introduction of chimneys and ceilings, the consequent replacement of the roof by the staircase as a vehicle for conspicuous decoration, and the decline of the hall. The revised view of Hoskins's "great rebuilding" of 1570-1680 is discussed, and considered alongside the rise of the great country house. At a more basic level, cottages are given due attention, together with the strange rock-built houses of Nottingham, where any destitute man with a shovel "may play the mole, the coney or the pioneer and work himself a hole or burrow for his family".

Houses and History is a concise guide to current thought in the subject, illustrated with many unfamiliar and recently discovered examples. The detailed footnotes might perhaps have been supplemented by a general bibliography as a further guide.

R. J. Brown's *Timber-Framed Buildings of England* attempts a more minute consideration of one material, and takes in much else besides, dealing with most aspects of traditional building practice. Others have covered the same ground before, but Brown is on the whole reliable, if not always aware of recent thinking and discoveries. For example, his treatment of the growing and availability of timber ignores revisions of long-standing myths, and there are curious allegations, such as that of the supposed introduction of sawpits in the sixteenth century (Barley illustrates a fifteenth-century example). It is wholly illustrated by the author, mostly external views of buildings taken from photographs, and with other drawings of details and building types. This makes for an attractive and consistent presentation, but the lack of analytical internal drawings makes it difficult to understand the discussion of buildings such as windmills, barns and bellies, where the timber framework is the significant part, and its construction can hardly be appreciated from the outside. Practical considerations are not absent from the text, however, and the book ends with some advice on repairs to timber buildings.

In conflict

Brian Alderson

ERHARD DAHL
Die Entstehung der Phantastischen Kinder- und Jugend-erzählung in England
192pp. Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh.
DM 37.
3306784544

It may come as a surprise to historians of children's literature to learn that, according to Erhard Dahl, the first "fantastic tale" to be published in England was the anonymous "Treasures of the Deep", which appeared in Charlotte Yonge's *Monthly Packet* in 1852. Rejected are such predecessors as *The Three Bears* (1837) or *The King of the Golden River* (1841-51), for these are simply imitation fairy tales. What Dr Dahl is after in his historical prologues is a qualitatively different invention.

The key word appears to be *Ordnungs-konflikt* (an approximate rendering of this word would be conflict in the order of things). At the very start of his book he draws attention to the way in which supernatural events intrude upon the natural order of affairs in Philippa Pearce's *Tom's Midnight Garden*, and, like many foreign commentators before him, he sees the resultant fantasy as belonging to a distinctively British contribution to children's literature. Alan Garner's *Elidor* and Ursula Le Guin's *Earthfests* he lists among a heterogeneous group of successors to Pearce's book, where the drama of the story arises from collision between two orders of "reality". His reading of such modern works has led him to inquire where the origins of the genre might lie.

Dahl proceeds methodically from the general to the particular. An unpromising start is made with a survey of current theories about fantasy in literature – unpromising because much of it has nothing to do with either children or their books. He then goes on to chart the emergence of "fantasy as *Ordnungs-konflikt*" in English children's literature, and to document its publication down to 1920 alongside what can be discovered of its contemporary reception. Finally he analyses salient features of the stories – motifs, characterization, narrative techniques – and sets these in the context of the wider "reading life" of the children for whom they were written. His findings reinforce the accepted view that much of the genre sprang from a simple wish to be entertaining (and/or to make a bit of money). When non-fantastic messages are introduced, as with some of E. Nesbit's comments on social ills, they are not plastered on too obtrusively.

Anyone who has come across Dahl's earlier work on English children's books – especially his admirable study of the abridgements of *Robinson Crusoe* (Frankfurt, 1977) – will be aware of his tenacity in pursuing the facts of the subject. While it is understandable that the heroes of his thesis should be Lewis Carroll, Mrs Molesworth and E. Nesbit he has unearthed upon a hundred "fantastic tales" that were published between 1852 and 1920. In the process he has examined the publishing history of the period – especially the role played by magazines – and has usefully underlined how the commercial transactions play a part in shaping children's literature.

For all its breaking of new ground, however, Dahl's book remains slightly confusing to the English reader who lacks perhaps a necessary "Lust zu analysieren". The fine distinctions between "fantastic tales" (ie, the ones with *Ordnungskonflikt*) and plain "fantasies" are not always easy to grasp. Why, for instance, should a dreamscape like *Alice* get in while *The Water Babies* is excluded merely because Kingsley insists on it all being "fun and pretence"? Are there not more parallels between Tom and Ellie and Tom and Hatty than may at once be apparent? Can a study of the fantastic tale that excludes *The Wind in the Willows*, or *Peter Rabbit* or *The Three Royal Monkeys* reach valid conclusions about the imaginative processes of authors and readers?

One should also note that in the transfer from typed thesis to photostated volume a certain tidiness has been preserved, curiously at odds with the "freedom" that is celebrated in the subject. This is not at all relieved by the twenty-one illustrations, which carry no captions and serve only to raise unanswered questions.

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In *A Chartist's Library* (266pp. Mansell. £30. 0 7201 1801 1831 X), Margaret Hambrick describes nearly 2,000 books, now in Vanderbilt University Library, from the family of G. J. Harney (1817-97), a journalist prominent in most of the principal Chartist newspapers, who emigrated to the United States in 1863.

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Revised versions

Dan Cruickshank

CHRISTOPHER STELL
An Inventory of Nonconformist Chapels and Meeting-Houses in Central England
276pp. HMSO. £45.
0117011819

One of the most striking impressions created by an examination of this well-illustrated book is that all the Nonconformist chapels and meeting houses built before 1840 are handsome while virtually all those built after that date are not. This schism can be noted in other building types whose development spans from the seventeenth century to the nineteenth but is particularly conspicuous in a study of Nonconformist chapels because their "unquestionable charm" lies in their "modest lack of ostentation". These words are Christopher Stell's and he is quite right; but he could have gone on to say that it is precisely these qualities that are absent after 1840. The pre-1840 chapels recorded in his book are, invariably, wonderfully unselfconscious essays in the English classical vernacular. For reasons of humility and poverty, seventeenth and eighteenth-century Nonconformist chapels are neither large nor showy. Typically, they are domestic in scale (often these chapels were created by adapting existing houses) and when some architectural display was indulged in, the designer simply emphasized those details reserved for

embellishment in contemporary domestic architecture – the door surround and the windows of the main entrance facade. The design of these embellishments, when they are permitted, reflects, as one might imagine, the motifs popularized in Christopher Wren's and James Gibbs's London churches – large segmental-arched windows, stone window arches set in brick walls, block surrounds to window and door, Venetian windows and, occasionally, crowning eaves, pediment and cornices.

Somewhere between 1830 and 1845 the spell was broken and, with architectural innocence gone, designers lurches as one man towards painfully self-conscious pretentiousness, producing chapels which looked like miniature Gothic cathedrals or admirably correct, though utterly unoriginal and spiritless, Greek revival temples.

The same observation can be made of the interior fittings but here another point is revealed. Stell's book – which, with a very short introduction, is essentially a gazetteer or inventory of the surviving chapels in the thirteen old counties (Rutland is revived) of central England – makes it quite clear that Nonconformist chapels are now the major repository of seventeenth and eighteenth-century ecclesiastical interior fittings. Liturgical reforms in the nineteenth century meant sweeping changes in most buildings of the established Church of England. It has become rare and memorable experience, to enter an eighteenth-century or

earlier parish church and find eighteenth-century fittings.

An *Inventory of Nonconformist Chapels and Meeting-Houses in Central England* is produced to the usual high standard of the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments. It will, of course, be owned and read by few but will be referred to by many. Its definitive descriptions, and plans, are the result, we are told, of "the survey of over 4,000 examples of nonconformist architecture... over a period of many years" by Stell, who has performed a heroic task.

Lord Ferrers, in his foreword to this inventory, stresses that "chapels and meeting-houses of outstanding importance throughout England need to be identified without delay". I hope this means that Christopher Stell's still unpublished researches will be compiled to form another volume on, perhaps, southern England. The public revelation of the architectural qualities of Nonconformist buildings is the best guarantee of their preservation.

Alec Clifton-Taylor's *English Parish Churches as Works of Art* (256pp., with 124 black-and-white illustrations. Batsford. £12.95. 0 7134 5026 6), first published in 1974, has recently been republished in a second edition. It treats parish churches purely aesthetically; the fabric, the architectural features of the exterior, the interior, the decorations and furnishings are all discussed at length, as well as the settings of the churches.